OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

35 YEARS OF INVADING
TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO RECALLS THE IMPACT OF HIS HIT COIN-OP

ALSO INSIDE
TOEJAM & EARL | FEZ | STYX | NEXUS
ROLLING THUNDER | EVIL DEAD | MYST
GARY WINNICK | 30 CAPCOM CLASSICS

Forgotten Masterpiece.

THE UNLOVED 8-BIT UNDERDOG THAT'S A COLLECTOR'S DREAM

ALL 269 PAL GAMES



Viking power
HOW BLIZZARD'S LOST VIKINGS PROVED THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Stealthily does it
THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT AND HOW IT REVOLUTIONISED THE STEALTH GENRE

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 117

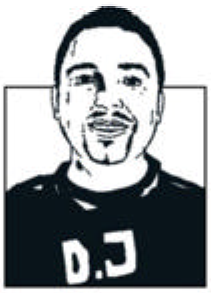
Naughty Dog
THE BEST FRIENDS WHO HELPED DEFINE THE PLAYSTATION BRAND

Breaking out the box
THE LEGACY OF BREAKOUT, STEVE WOZNIAK'S ADDICTIVE WALL BUSTER


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Refined and expanded gameplay with the addition of quick taps, quick lineouts, mauls from lineouts, interceptions, contesting ball at the breakdown, removing players from the ruck, number 8 scrum pickups, and dynamic in-game team strategies.
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TOP 14
PRO D2
Wallabies

THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE MASTER SYSTEM GAME



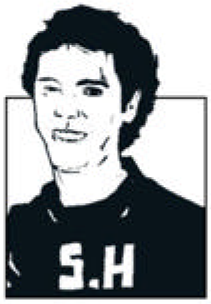
DARRAN JONES

It has to be *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*. A marvellous *Mario* alternative and one of the Master System's best games

Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
Resident Evil: Revelations

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

Definitely *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World*. I just love it, from the visuals to the fantastic music, and it combines two of my favourite ever game franchises.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them. Marketing

Currently playing:
Tomb Raider

Favourite game of all time:
Tomb Raider



PAUL DRURY

The Master System isn't one of my 'most played' consoles, but I have always enjoyed the *Wonder Boy* series.

Expertise:
Greek mythology

Currently playing:
Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



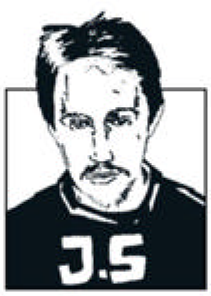
JASON KELK

Aleste is an excellent bit of scrolling and blasting action… although I have a soft spot for *Astro Warrior* as well!

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Xevious (Apple II)

Favourite game of all time:
IO



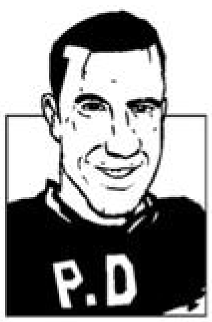
JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Phantasy Star. Released two days after the original *Final Fantasy*, yet infinitely more amazing. The SMS *Ninja Gaiden* comes a close second.

Expertise:
Japanese games

Currently playing:
Kickstarter

Favourite game of all time:
Star Control 2



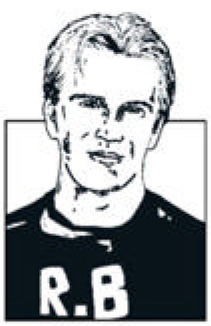
PAUL DAVIES

Has to be *Double Dragon*, because my friend and I played this until we could hardly see and our hands resembled Ice Warrior claws.

Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Halo 4

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls'n Ghosts



RICHARD BURTON

Psycho Fox. If you're a fan of platform games then this often overlooked gem needs your attention. Hugely playable with a style and look that's almost *Sonic*-like.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
Turmoil

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



IAIN LEE

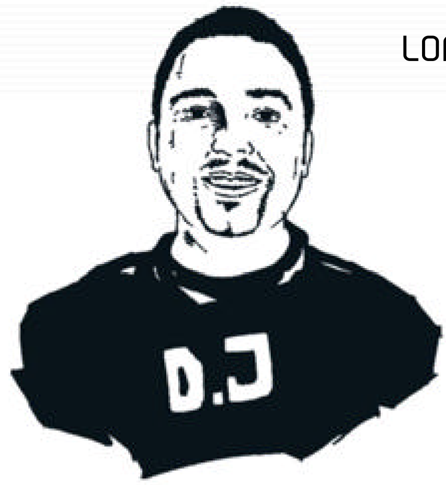
For me it has to be Sega's *Alex Kidd In Miracle World*.

Expertise:
Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live

Currently Playing:
Halo 4

Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC B version)

LOADING...



You never forget your first games console. Especially if it's one you've purchased with your own hard-earned cash. I was just 15 years old when I purchased my Sega Master System in 1988. I was working for a long-dead supermarket chain called Gateway surviving on a paltry £65 a week when I picked up the latest issue of *C+VG* and fell in love with Sega's console. I was a big fan of *Shinobi* at the time, regularly playing it at our local Sperrings (another long-defunct chain of shops) and the Master System was the first console to get a version, so I ordered the base version that came with a Light Phaser from my aunt's catalogue (remember those?) and waited for it to turn up with my £45 copy of *Shinobi*.

It arrived shortly afterwards and while *Shinobi* wasn't as good as the arcade original, I hungrily devoured it anyway along with *Hang-On*, *Safari Hunt* and *Snail Maze*, which were all built into the system. All my spare cash went into my expensive new hobby and I soon had a sizeable collection, a collection I've long since sold. I recently bought that same bundle recently from a forum member (thanks Pantaloons) and it brought back many happy memories for me. Hopefully our fantastic article about Sega's forgotten masterpiece do the same for you.

Enjoy the magazine,



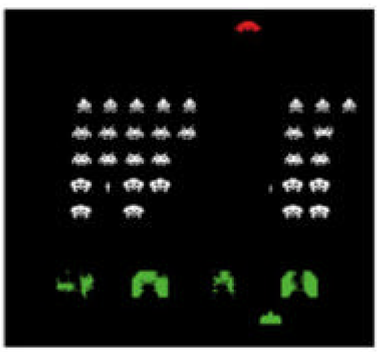


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>> Load 117 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED



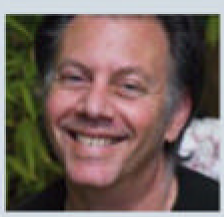
Forgotten Masterpiece.

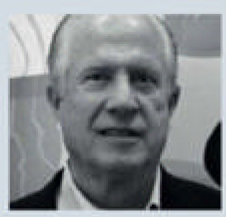
ALL 269 PAL GAMES



RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month…





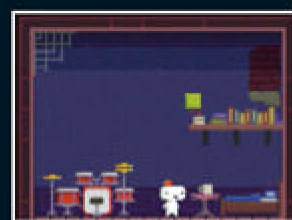
"To play Kuru Kuru Kururin is to fall in love with it"

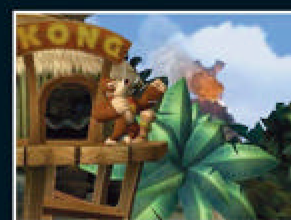
Stuart Hunt



ESSENTIALS

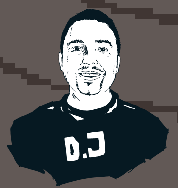
RETRO RATED





retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> This month we've spoken to David Yu, who is hoping that Hyperkin's RetroN 5 will change the way gamers approach their classic collections. There's also a brand new Sonic game courtesy of Sega and Nintendo that looks to build on the greatness of Sonic Colours.

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ARE OLD CONSOLES DEAD?

HYPERKIN'S DAVID YU ON WHY THE RETRON 5 MAY CHANGE GAMING

As much as we love our old consoles, they do take up a lot of precious space. Hyperkin thinks it has the answer with its new RetroN 5, a console that emulates various classic consoles. Past devices have usually only emulated a handful of machines and there have been some compatibility issues, but Hyperkin's new device is looking to fix all that. In fact, so confident is Hyperkin with its machine, it decided to skip the proposed RetroN 4 model that was announced last year, for an even more ambitious product. We were able to speak to Hyperkin's David Yu to find out more about the plans for the interesting new machine.



» [GBA] The inclusion of Game Boy Advance games means we no longer need to worry about our Game Boy Player.

RetroN 5: Close Up

>> We take a more in-depth look at Hyperkin's interesting new game console

Compatibility
The RetroN 5 allows for Mega Drive, Super Famicom, Super Nintendo, Famicom and Nintendo cartridges to be plugged into it. The end result means it looks a little like a toaster, but it does look like it's going to be a suitable all-in-one replacement for all your classic consoles.



» It might not be the most desirable-looking of consoles, but the RetroN 5 will neatly double up for a number of classic systems.

Controllers
In addition to featuring wireless Bluetooth controllers, you can use your original pads. It's a little ugly, but there's no denying that many games feel so much better with the correct controllers.

Connectivity
The RetroN 5 will allow you to get regular firmware updates as they are available. This should hopefully solve any potential emulator issues as they get discovered.

Something new
This is the first time that the RetroN series has catered for Game Boy Advance owners. A great alternative to those without a Game Boy Player.

The big interview

» We catch up with Hyperkin's David Yu and ask him how the RetroN 5 will change retro gaming

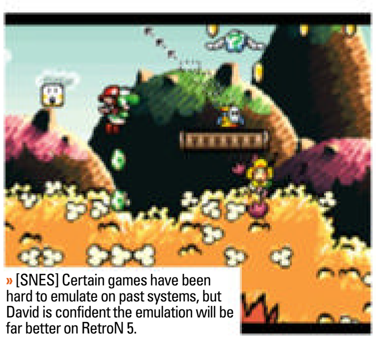


So why have you jumped from the RetroN 4 to the RetroN 5?
Originally we were planning on only having NES, SNES, Genesis and Game Boy Advance cartridge slots on the RetroN 4. However, during the course of development, we discovered that we could add the Famicom cartridge slot without hindering our current development cycle or affecting cost.

What is your aim with the RetroN 5? Do you see it as a way for gamers to replace their existing consoles?
Our goal with the RetroN 5 is to provide gamers the modern amenities and features enjoyed by current-gen gamers that the original consoles did not have. We wanted to create a console that implemented present-day technology, as well as deliver a console that we could definitively say is better than the original console.

How important do you feel the HDMI output will be and how will it compare to the native machines?
HDMI is a digital standard while the original machines were analogue. Many times people assume that digital trumps analogue, but that is not necessarily true. Modern televisions do all sorts of wonky things with old electronics and their outdated resolutions. So the real advantage of HDMI for the RetroN 5 is the way televisions interpret the signal output.

How accurate will the hardware emulation be? Can we expect to flawlessly play trickier games like *Super Mario 2: Yoshi's Island* and other Super FX titles?
Hardware emulation means we can tweak the software to achieve our goal of 100 per cent compatibility. Unlike previous clone systems, once those came off the manufacturing line, there was nothing you could do to improve them. We are committed to providing continuous firmware updates to bring our system up to the highest standard.



» [SNES] Certain games have been hard to emulate on past systems, but David is confident the emulation will be far better on RetroN 5.

Is this an officially licensed product? Have you had feedback from Sega or Nintendo?
No, this is not an officially licensed product. We have not received any type of feedback or contact from Sega or Nintendo.

An excellent price point of £70 was proposed for the RetroN 4. Can we expect a similar price on this new machine?
We still have not announced a definitive price point. It is our hope that we have finalised the MSRP by E3. It should be noted that the European version of this console may have a different MSRP from the North American version. Higher standards, certifications and taxes (VAT) do tend to drive up costs.

What will the RetroN 5 offer over its competitors?
That's a pretty long list! Most of the modern features found in the RetroN 5 exist in current-gen consoles, but have never been implemented into a retro product that is ready-made for the living room. These features include HDMI output and HD upconversion, the ability to save games at any point during gameplay, graphical filters, interpolated sound, button reassignment, as well as compatibility for both PAL and NTSC cartridges. These are just some of the many things the RetroN 5 is capable of doing, and there will be more features added after release, which will be available through our firmware updates.

You've mentioned Sega's Master System isn't viable due to lack of pin access. Could you not just contact Tectoy, as the machine is still very popular in Brazil, or is there another reason it can't be included?
The Master System is technically viable but not really market viable. I just checked eBay and the United States has 1,830 listings for Sega Master System and the United Kingdom has over 3,000. Despite the fact that the United States has four times the population, there just is not much of a Sega Master System following out here.

When will the RetroN 5 be released?
We have not set a definitive release date as of yet, so at the moment, it is summer 2013. We are hoping to have it released sometime in late July or early August 2013.

There are a lot of machines being emulated. What sort of processor will be powering the unit?
We cannot comment on this question as of yet, as we are still in development and would rather not disclose this information until development has been completed.

Will the emulation be better than on previous RetroNs?
Yes, most definitely! This is a whole new chipset configuration, and we are not limited to the limitation placed on us on previous chipsets found in our previous consoles. The previous RetroN systems and the current RetroN 5 have no overlap.

CHOICES, CHOICES

David Yu reveals the games you should play first on your RetroN 5

GAMEBOY ADVANCE
Advance Wars

SUPER NINTENDO
EarthBound

NES
Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!

MEGA DRIVE
Landstalker

SUPER FAMICOM
Wonder Project J

THE RETRO DEBATE

» Forum members discuss the RetroN 5

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

"I like the idea of HDMI support but it may not work like it should. Upscaling retro software for HDTVs has been a pain in my side for a while now. The lack of Master System and N64 support is disappointing for me" batman877

"I had a go on a RetroN 3 a while back. Whilst not perfect, the emulation was perfectly adequate. I for one will definitely be considering getting the RetroN 5" themightmartin

"I can see its uses for those already with a large collection of carts. It means one TV connection and one plug, perhaps a good thing for the living room? Conversely, it might be an easier way for gamers to get into collecting as they only have to source the carts and not all the hardware. Buying those consoles individually would cost a bomb. The HDMI-only output is a letdown for me: these games are not designed for HD televisions" RUOK



Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.

Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

Dear 1983 Iain Rougvie

I hope you're well. In fact, I know you are. You're ten years old and you haven't got jaded and bitter. Yet. It will come, but I thought I'd write and let you know how to make the next 30 years perhaps a little more enjoyable for you.

Firstly, it's pretty much downhill from here. Don't be disappointed, and there will be some amazing moments, but: this really is as good as it gets. With that in mind, let me give you some advice. I know you probably will ignore this but TRY TO PAY ATTENTION.

Firstly, ignore the bullying from Christopher Kelly about owning a Dragon 32. It *is* a good computer. Sure, it's not the best but it's much better than he'd have you believe. Turns out he's actually a bit jealous. And keep hold of the one you have now. Don't let your parents sell it to your uncle for £150. He'll resent you all for it. Get mum to put it in the loft and leave it there.

You will get a BBC Micro. Promise. Thing is, it will be about a year after everyone else has moved on. It doesn't matter. They are still cracking games, and you're going to become obsessed with something called *Stryker's Run*. So much so that even as you're turning 40, you'll be trying to find a copy of it to work on your laptop. Oh yeah, in the future, computers will be tiny and like a million times more powerful than they are now. And will go on top of your lap.

Anyway, other things to keep in mind. You'll have every right to hate your dad. But… try to make it up to him a bit sooner than 2010. He won't be around much after that.

When you meet a girl called Kerry Wakeford, just walk up to her and give her a massive snog (open mouth, waggle tongue a bit). She fancies you from day one so don't waste five years being coy. It ends in tears, they nearly always do, but it'll be worth it.

Don't drink. Don't take drugs. Or if you do, just keep an eye on it and don't go nuts.

Don't ignore a thing called a Game Boy. I waited ages to have a go on it, shunning it because it is black and white. That shouldn't put you off. Get straight in there.

When you finally make the decision to buy a PlayStation, wait another two weeks. The price goes down by £200.

I've got a phone that allows me to take photos and it FITS IN MY POCKET!

Flying cars still don't exist. Sorry about that. The disappointment never ends. Films are lying to you.

Ooh, you're probably going to find a video cassette labelled 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' in a few weeks. Please don't watch it until you're 18. It will mess you up for years.

Right, that's it, all the important stuff. One more thing, you're gonna be a dad!

Take care. Miss you.

Iain Lee (2013)

PS you drop the Rougvie when you get a job on the telly. Good for you!

the wall

» EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF RETRO THIS MONTH

HOMEBREW HEROES ANNOUNCED

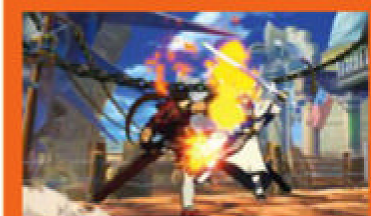
In addition to being an excellent retro event, Revival was also an opportunity for Kieren Hawken and Darren Doyle to launch their brand new fanzine.

The pair have been working on Homebrew Heroes for the past six months and the 100-page plus zine will be solely dedicated to the increasingly popular homebrew scene. There's no news yet on a printed version, but a digital one will be available from **www.homebrewheroes.co.uk** and should cost £3.99 to download.



GUILTY GEAR RETURNS

Arc System Works has revealed that a brand new *Guilty Gear* is in the works. The company has recently been putting all its efforts into its excellent *BlazBlue* series, but it has decided to return to the popular fighting franchise that it first made its name with. Interestingly, this will not only be the first *Guilty Gear* game to not use sprites, but will also be the first to be powered by the Unreal engine. The results look fantastic and while only a brief battle between Ky Kiske and Sol Badguy has been shown, it all seems amazingly slick. Interestingly, Arc System Works isn't revealing what platforms the game will be coming out on. Needless to say, more news as we get it.



» The new engine looks amazing.

MOST EXCITED ABOUT... SHADOW OF THE ETERNALS

Denis Dyack's spiritual episodic successor to the fantastic *Eternal Darkness* is looking for crowdfunding right now. We hope it reaches its ambitious target.

» *Sonic: Lost World* looks like a great return to form for Sega's popular hedgehog. Roll on the end of the year.



READERS REACT TO NEW SONIC GAMES

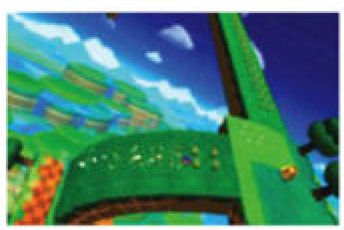
ARE THE WII U AND 3DS BEST FOR SEGA'S MASCOT?

Sega recently set the Sonic Cycle into motion again with the news of new *Sonic* games exclusively for Nintendo's consoles.

The latest Nintendo Direct offered a substantial look at a brand new *Sonic & Mario At The Winter Olympics* with numerous new events and some nifty integration of the Wii U. Nintendo also confirmed that every *Sonic* Game Gear game (and more besides) would be heading to the 3DS Virtual Console service. It's unclear how many titles there will be, but 14 games were shown off, varying in quality from the great (*Shining Force II: The Sword Of Hajya*) to the dire (*Sonic Drift 1* and *2*). The final reveal was *Sonic: Lost Worlds*, Sonic's brand new action game. Only a trailer has been shown so far, but we're already getting rather excited, as it seems to be highly similar to Nintendo's fantastic *Super Mario Galaxy* series. Sonic has the ability to run along walls, while the abstract-looking levels constantly spin and turn, creating brand new areas for the hedgehog to explore.

"Any Sonic game that recaptures the essence of the original Mega Drive trilogy can only be a good thing," commented forum member JetSetWilly. Snowkatt, however, is less impressed, revealing: "It's a platformer and I hate platformers. Add in Sonic's worrying tendency to descend into soap opera with unskippable cut-scenes and you've got a series of games I am supremely unenthusiastic about. Hopefully *Generations* and *Colors* were not flukes."

While the announcement is dividing readers, we're actually excited about the news. Both *Sonic Generations* and *Sonic Colors* in particular were great returns to form and with the same team on coding duties, we're very interested to see the direction it will take. Expect more news after E3.



» [Wii U] *Super Mario Galaxy* is clearly an inspiration for Sonic's new game, so we're extremely happy.



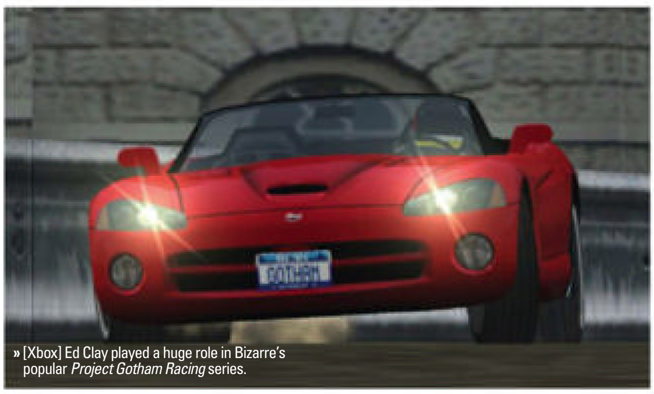
THE FULL GAME GEAR LIST THAT NINTENDO REVEALED

- Columns
- Crystal Warriors
- Defenders Of Oasis
- Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine
- G-LOC Air Battle
- Shining Force II: The Sword Of Hajya
- Sonic Blast
- Sonic The Hedgehog
- Sonic The Hedgehog 2
- Sonic Drift
- Sonic Drift 2
- Sonic Labyrinth
- Tails Adventure
- Vampire: Master Of Darkness

INDUSTRY VETERAN PASSES

TRIBUTE PAID TO BIZARRE CREATIONS' ED CLAY

Bizarre Creations was one of Britain's most exciting software houses and it's untimely death in 2011 set the UK games industry reeling. Now the ex staff members have been hit by another loss: Ed Clay, who recently passed away on 19 April at the young age of 39. Ed was an integral part of many of Bizarre's greatest games and we contacted the ex-managing director of Bizarre Creations, Martyn Chudley for his thoughts. "Ed really was a bit of a quiet genius, coming to us from developing software at CERN," reveals Martyn about the loss of his colleague. "He was quietly spoken and said little – but when he did talk people listened, and a word was never wasted. However, he was extremely sociable and touched most elements of our games, but predominantly the physics (both car and bike), rendering and AI… without him the *Project Gotham Racing* series and Bizarre Creations as a whole would have been far, far weaker. I can clearly remember how, when we were offered Ed's CV way back in 2000, we had to fight Sony for his services! We were truly lucky to have won." This also comes at a time when recently two other ex-Bizarre staff, John Kennedy and Tony Stockton, also sadly passed away.



» [Xbox] Ed Clay played a huge role in Bizarre's popular *Project Gotham Racing* series.



DEUS EX MACHINA GOES KICKSTARTER

MEL CROUCHER REVISITS HIS 8-BIT CLASSIC

Classic 8-bit developer Mel Croucher is returning to his cult hit *Deus Ex Machina* via Kickstarter. The original game was an interactive movie cum rock album and Croucher has been working tirelessly on its sequel, which is planned for both PC and Mac. Croucher requires £64,000 which will be used to create prototypes for iOS and Android, tweak the gameplay components of the game (which has already been translated into 18 languages), customise various versions for different backers and much more. He's been working on the game for the past two years and has already put together the main game and rounded up an impressive cast that includes Christopher Lee and Joaquim de Almeida.

INTRODUCING BRAIN DUMP

IMAGINE LAUNCHES EXCITING NEW DIGITAL-ONLY SCIENCE MAGAZINE



Imagine Publishing breaks new ground with its incredible new digital science magazine Brain Dump.

Available from Apple's Newsstand from just £0.69/$0.99, Brain Dump is an excellent digital-only magazine filled with fascinating facts about nature, science, space and everything else you need to expand your knowledge base about the world around you. It features slick presentation and easy-to-digest articles that make it perfect for today's generation obsessed with social media.

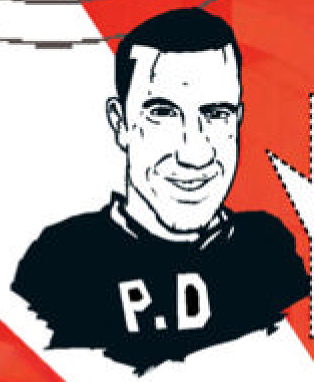
"This is a brand-new digital publishing initiative that will make everyone sit up and take notice – from its cutting-edge subscription model to the bespoke design and shape of content," reveals Imagine's head of publishing, Aaron Asadi.

Brain Dump is available now and will be released monthly with subscriptions ranging from £0.69/$0.99 for a month, to £3.99/$5.99 for a year. Don't miss this excellent opportunity to start expanding your mind with all manner of fascinating content.



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Here's my bio...
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

Lost Horizons

I've avoided writing this for as long as I could, because I like to think of gaming as something that unites us all. But a comment from a recent interview on US gaming website Polygon just rattled the cage of a particular concern of mine. I miss the big games from Japan. Not only that, I miss how the big games from Japan characterised the whole business of console gaming… and made it fun!

Cosplayer Ger Tysk told Polygon: "I don't play a lot of games anymore because I don't like the stuff that's coming out. I guess the kind of design that I like is the happier, more cheerful bright colours." This is from somebody who adores games and gaming characters so much that she hand-makes costumes to replicate them in the real world. This is a passionate gamer, running on empty.

I'm hearing similar sentiments expressed more and more as the new generation approaches. We miss the old Sega (AM2, Sonic Team), and we covet old Mega Drive boxes and manuals more than *BioShock Infinite Ultimate Songbird Edition*. I don't think this is a retro thing, I believe it's a case of artistic direction – the *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* packaging for Mega Drive looks awesome to this day; so much colour and character. Drool!

If I can just flick the switch on a favourite half-remembered quote, it might shed some light here. *Dragon Quest* creator Yuji Horii told me that Famicom (NES) games inspired him to get involved because it was like seeing manga come to life. And as the subsequent illustrations from *Dragon Ball* artist Akira Toriyama testify, the vibrant imagery of the *Dragon Quest* series still has few equals.

More recently, the collaboration between Studio Ghibli and Level-5 resulted in *Ni No Kuni*, one of the most beautiful console adventures I've ever experienced. It also has a sense of humour and moments of pure heartbreak that I daresay you'll only find in a Japanese production. This is the kind of thing I think we're all missing.

While contemplating this, the biggest surprise came when *The Sun* newspaper named Nintendo 3DS 'Best Console Ever'. Why? Because of games that include (and I quote): "*Mario & Luigi: Dream Team*, *Pokémon X* and *Y*, *Mario Golf* and a sequel to *Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*", while at the same time proclaiming "*Fire Emblem* (my 2013 game of the year), *Luigi's Mansion* (excellent)." All these, you'll note, are from the traditional Japanese-school of gaming excellence.

The manga/anime connection is not insignificant. In Japan this means you'll see great tie-ins with anime series (*Pokémon*!), to-die-for figurines as with Kai Arts' *Final Fantasy* and *Devil May Cry* line-up, and related 'Perfect' guide books that weigh as much as the old London Yellow Pages.

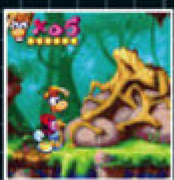
Joy and colour used to give us so much to look forward to, but the current-gen PlayStation and Xbox have rinse-repeated *Call Of Duty* and *FIFA* to such a mind-numbing extent that consumers have lost their taste for what many RG readers were raised upon.

Yes, the dust is settling on the last console war between Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo. Lying on the battlefield, eyes dimmed, are the brightly coloured heroes of my youth.

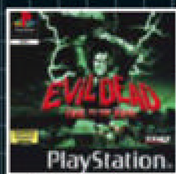
21 June – 18 July

retrodiary

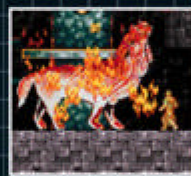
>> A month of retro events both past and present



22 June 2001
■ Ubisoft's platform game star Rayman makes his first videogame appearance on the Game Boy Advance in *Rayman Advance*.

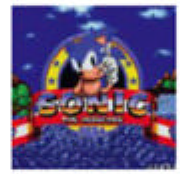


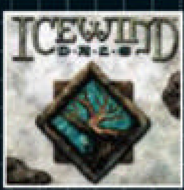
22 June 2001
■ *Evil Dead: Hail To The King* is released in Europe on PlayStation by THQ. Shop smart, shop S-Mart.



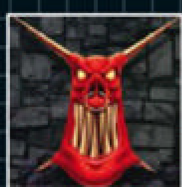
22 June 2001
■ Konami's action game *Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon* is released exclusively on Game Boy Advance.

23 June 1991
■ A new game starring a new character called *Sonic The Hedgehog* is released in the UK and USA simultaneously on the Sega Mega Drive (aka Genesis).





29 June 2000
■ The role-playing game *Icewind Dale* is published by Interplay for Windows PC.



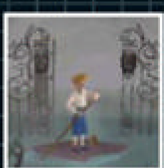
26 June 1997
■ Developed by Bullfrog and published by Electronic Arts, strategy game *Dungeon Keeper* is released on PC.



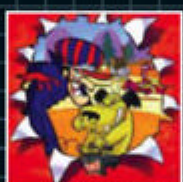
25 June 1993
■ LucasArts' sequel to its *Maniac Mansion* adventure, *Day Of The Tentacle* is released on PC.



25 June 1993
■ Get over here! Midway's *Mortal Kombat II* hits the arcades.



29 June 2001
■ There's more Guybrush Threepwood with the UK release of LucasArts' *Escape From Monkey Island* for the PlayStation 2.



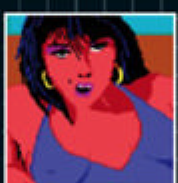
29 June 2001
■ If you like your races wacky and your Dicks dastardly, then *Wacky Races* released on the PlayStation 2 would be right up your Chuggabug…



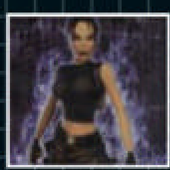
29 June 2012
■ The *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* is released on PlayStation Vita. It consists of two games: *Sons Of Liberty* and *Snake Eater*.



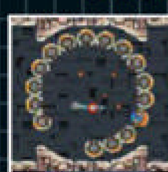
30 June 2000
■ Joanna Dark makes her debut when Rare releases the first-person shooter *Perfect Dark* on the Nintendo 64 in Europe.



5 July 1987
■ Larry Laffer makes his debut in *Leisure Larry In The Land Of The Lounge Lizards* on MS-DOS and Apple II systems.



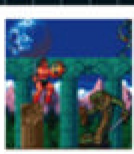
4 July 2003
■ *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider – The Angel Of Darkness* is released on the PlayStation 2 by Eidos Interactive.



1 July 1987
■ Irem's frenetic side-scrolling shoot-'em-up *R-Type* is released into arcades.



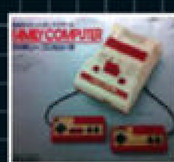
30 June 2011
■ *James Pond In The Deathly Shallows*, the fifth in the series, is released for iOS devices. It stinks worse than a rancid kipper.



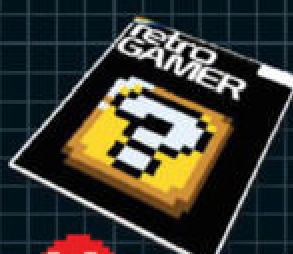
7 July 1989
Rastan Saga II, Taito's coin-op sequel to its hit hack-and-slash scrolling platform game, is released in arcades.



10 July 1987
■ Combat arcade flight simulator *After Burner* arrives in arcades for barrel rolls aplenty…

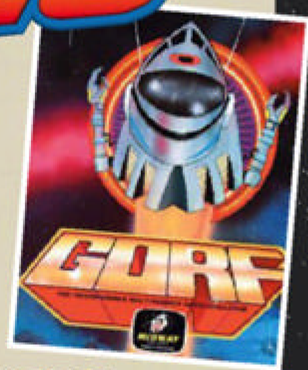


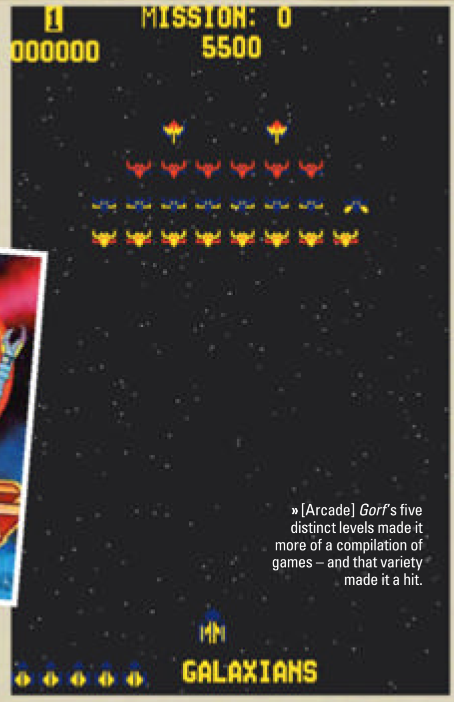
15 July 1983
■ Nintendo's Family Computer (aka Famicom) is released to an excited Japanese videogaming public.



18 July 2013
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

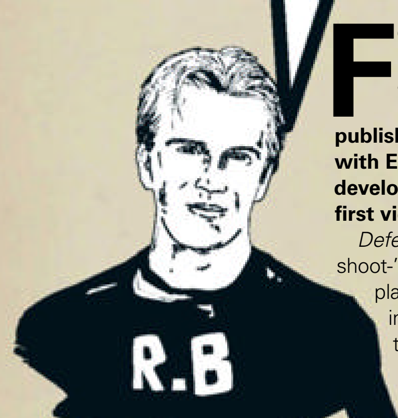




» [Arcade] *Gorf*'s five distinct levels made it more of a compilation of games – and that variety made it a hit.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM FEBRUARY 1981

FEBRUARY 1981 – There's coin-op joy with Defender, Gorf and Scramble fighting for your loose change, New Rally-X fighting for anyone to notice it and Nintendo's Game & Watch Helmet launched. Richard Burton drops a coin…



February was an outstanding month for new arcade releases and top of the coin-op pile was *Defender*. It was developed and published by Williams Electronics, with Eugene Jarvis at the helm of the development team in what was his first videogame project.

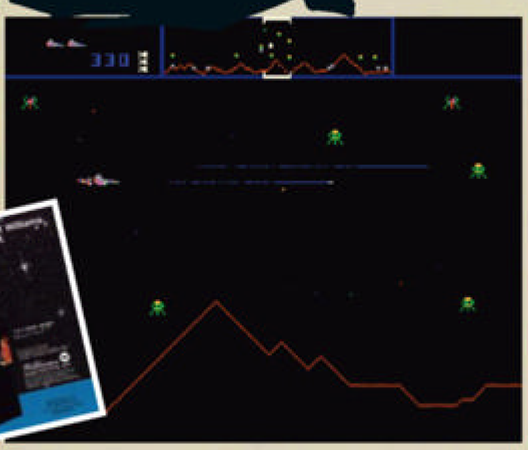
Defender was a 2D horizontal scrolling shoot-'em-up set on the surface of a planet. You could fly your spaceship in both directions, with the aim of the game being to destroy as many aliens as you could while saving the people stranded on the planet's surface. To aid you, there was an on-screen scanner which detected where the aliens and people were. This was something of a videogaming first as it was the first instance of a videogame having a world occurring in real time outside of the visible playing area. *Defender*'s other unique feature was its controls, which consisted of a joystick and five fire buttons: thrust, reverse, fire and two escape options with smart bomb and hyperspace, when you had them available.

Your aim was to defeat all the aliens and progress to the next level. However, should you not manage to protect every person on the planet, as they were systematically abducted, then it exploded and became overrun with aliens. If you manage to stave off the alien waves, then the planet is restored to its former self.

Defender was a massive success at the arcades, despite fears that the game was far too difficult. It did take a while for the people to warm to, but once gamers had got to grips with the fast pace and abundance of controls, it took off, becoming the biggest-selling arcade game for Williams Electronics and one of the few arcade coin-op games in history to eventually earn over $1 billion. Needless to say, a sequel was produced and *Defender II* (aka *Stargate*) was released in November 1981.

Also out in arcadeland was Midway's *Galactic Orbiting Robot Force*, which was more commonly known as *Gorf*. It was a fixed shooter game with five different stages of play: Astro Battles, Laser Attack, Galaxians, Space Warp and Flag Ship. Levels varied in gameplay, with Astro Battles playing like *Space Invaders* and Galaxians playing like… well… *Galaxian*. Complete these five missions and you gained a new ranking and looped back to the beginning with a higher degree of difficulty – and there were six levels of ranking ranging from Space Cadet to Space Avenger.

Gorf was originally going to be used as the videogame tie-in for the forthcoming *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* movie, but the developers reckoned the storyline





» [Arcade] *Defender* became an arcade classic and garnered critical acclaim despite being one of the hardest coin-ops to master.



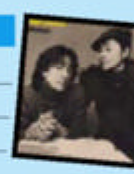
» [Arcade] *New Rally-X* wasn't really that new. It was more of the old *Rally-X* with nicer graphics.

CHARTS

FEBRUARY 1981

MUSIC

1 Woman (John Lennon)
2 Shaddap You Face (Joe Dolce)
3 Vienna (Ultravox)
4 In The Air Tonight (Phil Collins)
5 I Surrender (Rainbow)



couldn't work in videogame form and the tie-up was rejected. However, the *Gorf* ship still retained its USS Enterprise-esque appearance when released…

Gorf had a couple of interesting new features, one of which was the use of speech synthesis comprising over 30 different phrases, some of them even audible. Another nice feature was the ability to purchase extra lives before you undertook your game. Ordinarily you would start with three lives, but this could be bumped up to seven by buying more before the game began.

Gorf played well and sold well too. It was ported to various home consoles, although the Galaxians level had to be removed due to licensing difficulties. A sequel was mooted, *Ms Gorf*, but sadly never materialised.

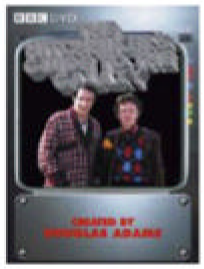
The third big coin-op release this month was *Scramble* by Konami. *Scramble* was a side-scrolling shoot-'em-up which saw you attempt to fly your ship through six distinct levels which, in another arcade gaming first, were all seamlessly blended together into one continuous run.

With hints of *Defender* in its gameplay, *Scramble* was a lot more forgiving with a shallower learning curve. Your ship had to navigate through each level by shooting and dodging aliens, avoiding contact with the ground and walls while, in yet another videogaming first, continually replenishing your fuel supply by destroying the fuel dumps scattered about. Each level had its own character and appearance, varying from caverns to cityscape to your target of the main base on the sixth level. Once the base had been destroyed, it was hearty congratulations and you were looped back to the beginning with the added hindrance of a ship afflicted with more severe fuel consumption.

Scramble became a very popular game and despite its similar style of gaming to *Defender*, its bold colourful graphics and playability, which eased you into the game, really caught the imagination of arcade dwellers. It was another game ripe for console and home computer conversion and cloning… which virtually every software company did.

FEBRUARY WORLD NEWS

9 February saw the TV adaption of Douglas Adams' book *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* have its sixth and final episode aired on BBC Two. It introduced us to the world of Arthur Dent, Zaphod Beeblebrox, Trillian, Ford Prefect and Marvin The Paranoid Android and the countdown to the end of planet Earth…



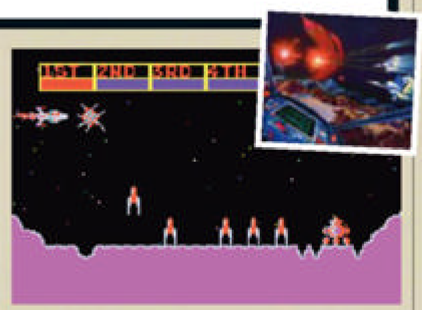
9 February also marked the death of American rock and roll legend Bill Haley. With his band The Comets he popularised the rock and roll music genre in the 1950s with hits such as *Rock Around The Clock*, *See You Later Alligator* and *Shake, Rattle And Roll*. He died of a heart attack aged 55.

20 February saw the debut on BBC One of the children's quiz show *Finders Keepers*. Two teams of three primary school kids answered questions to be able to take guesses on the seven-by-seven computerised battleships grid created with a BBC Model B computer. It was hosted by bearded songwriter and musician Richard Stilgoe, who always played the theme tune on a synthesiser live at the beginning of each show.

Born this month were socialite and 'celebrity' Paris Hilton (17 February), television presenter Holly Willoughby (10 February) and American actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt (17 February) who is best known for playing (Robin) John Blake in the Batman film, *The Dark Knight Rises* and as Tommy Solomon, the alien disguised as a teenage human, in the American comedy television series *3rd Rock From The Sun*.



» [Game & Watch] Nintendo got its *Helmet* out; if not careful, you could get the wrench right on your head…



» [Arcade] *Scramble* became an arcade favourite due to its simplicity. It was essentially a memory game with blasters.

Not to be left out of all this lovely arcade newness was Namco with the release of the sequel to its *Rally-X* game, the cunningly titled *New Rally-X*. Not a lot had changed from the original; the graphics were slightly better and it wasn't as hard to play as its predecessor, but otherwise it was the same old flag-collecting, maze-driving arcade game. By the time it reached Europe, such was the apathy toward it that *New Rally-X* was distributed only as an upgrade to the original game rather than as a fully fledged cabinet release.

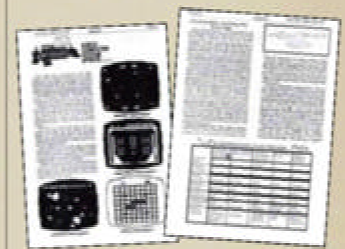
In the smaller world of handheld gaming, Nintendo's latest Game & Watch title *Helmet*, the seventh so far, hit the streets and rapidly became another of its million units bestsellers. Simplicity ruled once again as you guided Mr Game & Watch across from the house on the left to the house on the right of the screen while trying to avoid a sudden downpour of tools and buckets. Frequently your exit door would slam shut, leaving you vulnerable to falling pliers and spanners and feverishly dodging the tools until the door reopened. Wrenchtastic!

THIS MONTH IN…

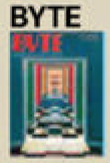
ANALOG



In its premier issue, *Analog* reviewed no less than five different *Star Trek*-based games for the Atari 400/800. With *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* due imminently, it's probably safe to say that none of these was an official tie-in game. What was more disappointing was that most of them were rubbish.



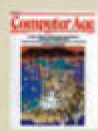
BYTE



Byte featured an interesting dissection of everybody's favourite 1970s plastic tank, Milton Bradley's Big Trak. Rather than telling us how it couldn't manoeuvre on a shagpile carpet, they opted for the in-depth DIY robot enthusiast's angle and how it had potential for being cannibalised for school projects. Yawn.



COMPUTER AGE

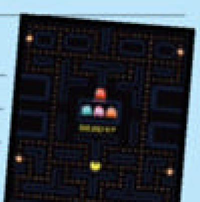


Sinclair Research's prominent advertising for its bestselling ZX80 computer was everywhere, including *Computer Age*. With a £99.99 pre-built price tag, it was good value… or was it? Presumably Sinclair was trying to shift as many ZX80s as it could before launching its new ZX81 next month…



ARCADE

1 Pac-Man (Namco)
2 Missile Command (Atari)
3 Asteroids (Atari)
4 Battlezone (Atari)
5 Moon Cresta (Nichibutsu)



GAME & WATCH

1 Fire (Nintendo)
2 Manhole (Nintendo)
3 Vermin (Nintendo)
4 Judge (Nintendo)
5 Flagman (Nintendo)



ATARI 2600

1 Dragster (Activision)
2 Pele's Soccer (Atari)
3 Fishing Derby (Activision)
4 Golf (Atari)
5 Video Pinball (Atari)

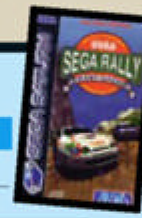


BACK TO THE NINETIES CHARTS



APRIL 1996

SEGA SATURN	
1	Sega Rally (Sega)
2	Virtua Fighter 2 (Sega)
3	FIFA Soccer '96 (Electronic Arts)
4	Worms (Team 17)
5	Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2 (Core)



» [Arcade] Running on the powerful new Model 3 arcade system, *Virtua Fighter 3* really was an impressive game.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1996

APRIL 1996 – Virtua Fighter 3 promises much, Virtua Fighter Kids promises little, Square drops Nintendo for Sony, Sega Saturn gets a squeeze of Lemming and The Need For Speed needs more speed. Richard Burton gets his gearstick stuck…



Over the last few years Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series had been a fan favourite with its pioneering 3D polygon graphics and fast-paced gameplay. When Sega announced that the new *Virtua Fighter 3* was to appear in arcades late summer, it generated quite a buzz.

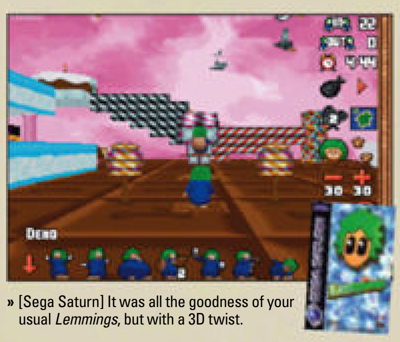
The most exciting revelation regarding *Virtua Fighter 3* was that it would be the first to use Sega's new Model 3 arcade system. This new powerful system was to be the last in the partnership with Real3D Inc, a spin-off division from global aerospace and defence company Lockheed Martin which created the hardware designed to handle the advanced 3D graphics. In fact, the Model 3 system was by far and away the most powerful arcade system released to date, capable of generating over one million polygons per second, over three times as many as Sega's previous Model 2.

So the hardware was undeniably state of the art, but what of the game itself? Designed by Sega's AM2 department headed by Yu Suzuki, *Virtua Fighter 3* promised many enhancements to the gameplay – most notable of which was the inclusion of a fourth control option, the dodge button, in addition to the kick, guard and punch options. Dodge would allow you to move in or out of the screen to avoid attacks rather than using outright defensive manoeuvres. It would also allow you to counterattack immediately.

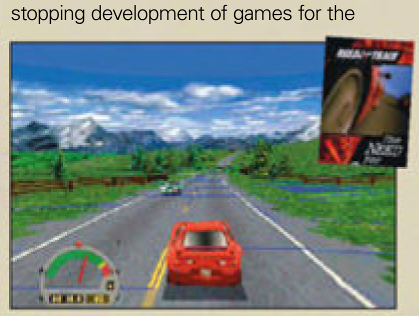
Some stages were redesigned with a new undulation feature. Rather than just having a flat level to fight on, you could now jump to higher ground such as sloping roofs and staircases to gain an advantage. With outstanding graphics, improved gameplay and two new characters, *Virtua Fighter 3* would prove to be a huge success.

If the wait for the third instalment was too much to bear, Sega filled the gap with the release of *Virtua Fighter Kids*, a super-deformed version of *Virtua Fighter 2*. While the cutesy fighters with overly large heads seemed bizarre, it played well and garnered quite a following… mainly in Japan.

In a move that was sure to disappoint fans of the Super Nintendo, a press release announced that Square would be stopping development of games for the

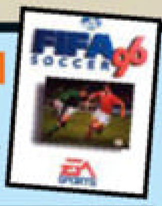


» [Sega Saturn] It was all the goodness of your usual *Lemmings*, but with a 3D twist.



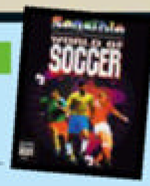
» [3DO] Ironically, the one thing *The Need For Speed* needed in the 3DO version was a more realistic feeling of speed.

MEGA DRIVE



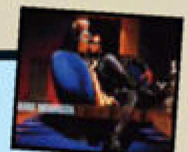
1. FIFA Soccer '96 (Electronic Arts)
2. Sonic & Knuckles (Sega)
3. Premier Manager (Sega)
4. Micro Machines '96 (Codemasters)
5. Mickey Mania (Sony)

AMIGA



1. Sensible World Of Soccer 95/96 (Virgin Games)
2. Worms (Ocean)
3. Player Manager 2: Extra Time (Virgin Games)
4. Alien Breed 2 (Ocean)
5. Super Stardust (Ocean)

MUSIC



1. Return Of The Mack (Mark Morrison)
2. Ooh Aah… Just A Little Bit (Gina G)
3. Firestarter (The Prodigy)
4. The X Files (Mark Snow)
5. They Don't Care About Us (Michael Jackson)

SNES. Furthermore, and a major concern for Nintendo, was the news that Capcom would not be supporting the new N64 console when it was eventually released.

Square was another deserter of Nintendo's new console. It had planned to support the system but the seemingly ongoing no-show of the console, the memory storage limitations of cartridge over CD games and the cheaper costs of developing games on CD led Square to abandon Nintendo in favour of developing games for Sony's PlayStation.

It also seemed that Nintendo had rubbed Square up the wrong way, with Square citing "differences of opinion with Nintendo with regard to software development and distribution". It later transpired that Square of Japan took an instant dislike to the development kits Nintendo had send out to companies and promptly returned the ones it had been sent.

This ultimately meant bad news for SNES owners and those particularly with a love of Square's *Final Fantasy* RPG series. The latest instalment, *FFVII*, had already been under development for the SNES before being switched to the N64 and finally halted in favour of the PlayStation, for which it proved to be an outstandingly successful title in terms of sales and critical acclaim. In Japan it sold over two million copies in the first three days of release alone.



» [Arcade] *Virtua Fighter Kids* played absolutely fine. Those oversized super-deformed heads, though… gah!

One small consolation for SNES owners was that Square's commitment to finishing and releasing the last few games in development remained intact, meaning that *Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars* and the company's farewell SNES title *Treasure Hunter G* would be finished and released.

If you were a Sega Saturn owner who was also a fan of *Lemmings* then this month you were potentially going to soil your undergarments with news that Psygnosis was soon to release *3D Lemmings*. Gameplay would be much the same as previous outings: lead and save as many lemmings as you can by giving each of them a skill or command and get them to the exit. As the title suggests, the Saturn version would be in glorious 3D. Floating controllable cameras hovering around each level gave you a valuable overview for you to put your plan of action into place and there was also the Virtual Lemming option which allowed you to see the level through the eyes of a lemming. This different perspective was often required to see things the cameras couldn't.

Also coming out for the Saturn very soon and already available for the PlayStation was something of a gaming rarity, a 3DO conversion. The original *The Need For Speed* was released at the end of 1994 and was critically acclaimed as one of the best racing/driving simulations around. It had realistic physics, beautiful designed courses and a swathe of exotic cars to enjoy.

The conversion to PlayStation was just as successful, with Electronic Arts having added a few extra tweaks. While it was the standout racer on the 3DO, it didn't quite hit the heights of racing games on the PlayStation, with the likes of *Ridge Racer* and *Sega Rally* edging ahead with better controls and a more faithful representation of speed.

The Saturn version was just as playable, but was starting to feel dated by the time of its release, although the addition of the simultaneous two-player option did help its longevity. *The Need For Speed* set the early standard for realistic driving games and spawned a racing franchise which continues unabated today.

APRIL WORLD NEWS

6 April saw the first game in the inaugural season of Major League Soccer, the American football league. The first game was played between the San Jose Clash and DC United, with San Jose's Eric Wynalda scoring the first ever MLS goal.

12 April saw the UK release of the film *Broken Arrow* starring John Travolta and Christian Slater. The broken arrow in question is a term used for a nuclear device that has been 'lost' and in this case rogue US pilot Major Deakins (Travolta) has had two of them away after deliberately crashing his bomb-carrying fighter. His master plan is to detonate the nuclear warheads in Salt Lake City unless a $250 million ransom is paid. His co-pilot (Slater) and a park ranger decide to go after him, with action-packed consequences…

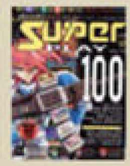


17 April saw Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson (the Duke and Duchess Of York) begin divorce proceedings after ten years of marriage. They had already been separated for four years after drifting apart. The Duke would leave for his naval duties while 'Fergie' would frequently be seen in the company of other men. She endured public ridicule and endless tabloid press coverage which strained her relationship with the Royal Family.

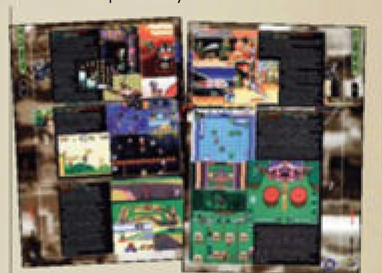
28 April saw one of the Cartoon Network's most popular and successful cartoon series, *Dexter's Laboratory*, air for the first time. It ran for 78 episodes over a seven-year period and such was its popularity that music albums, videogames, comic books and a range of toys followed.

THIS MONTH IN…

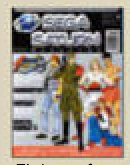
SUPER PLAY



Not sure of the best SNES games? *Super Play*'s All Time Top 100 Games countdown would put you right. The top three were predictable with *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* at number one, while *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* and *Super Mario Kart* were placed two and three respectively.



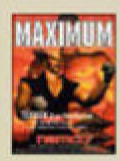
OFFICIAL SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE



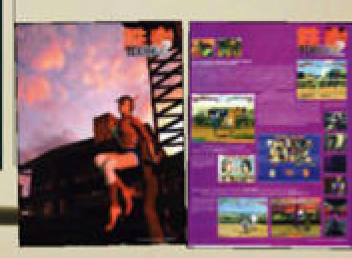
SNK's *The King Of The Fighters* franchise was converted to the Sega Saturn. Would that unique Neo Geo/SNK feel be retained in *The King Of The Fighters 95*? Absolutely. With the looks and feel of the original, it made for a refreshing beat-'em-up, mixing style with substance.

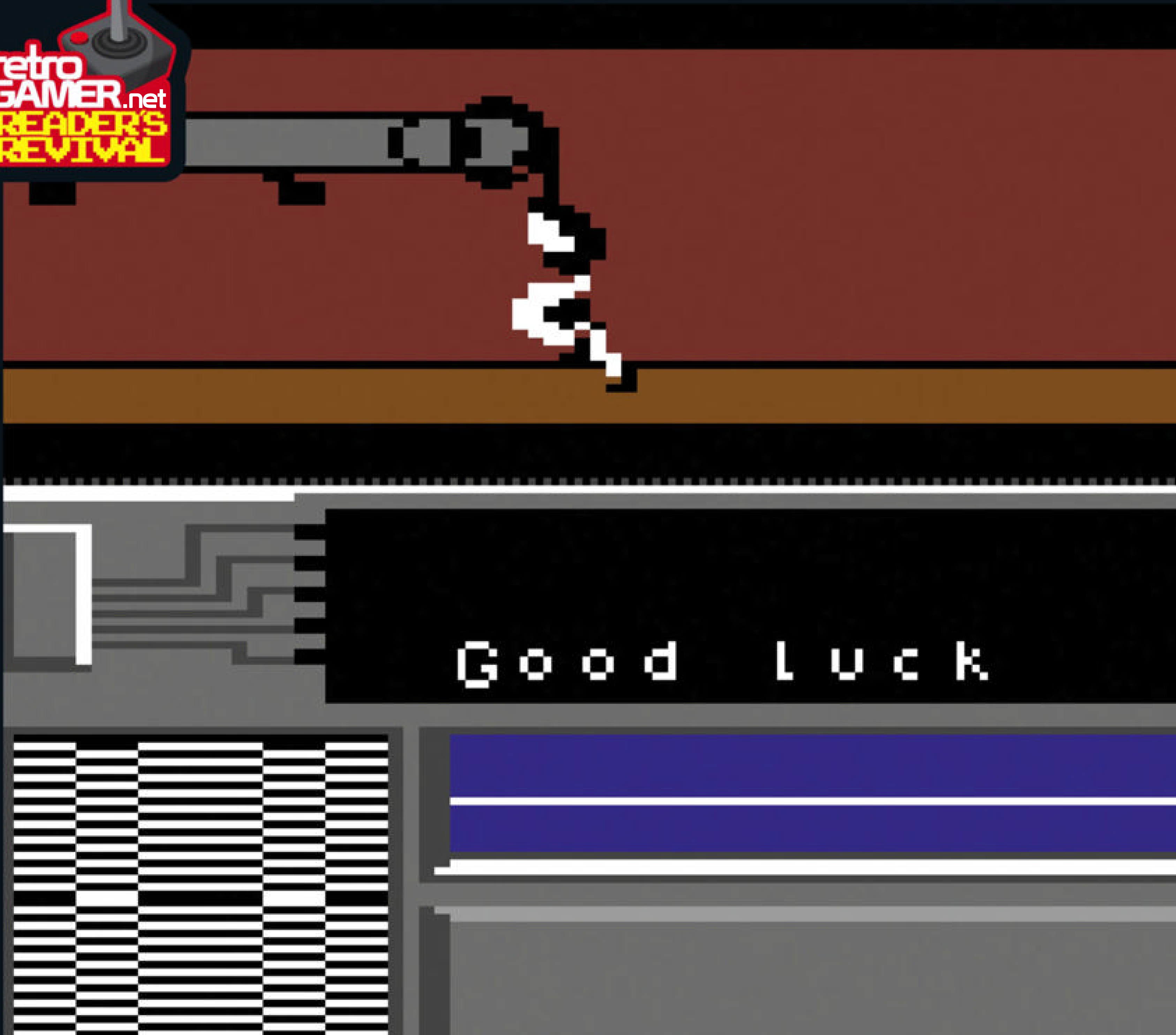


MAXIMUM



The *Maximum* team were known for thorough coverage of games, but they surpassed themselves with the PlayStation conversion of *Tekken 2*. They embraced it wholeheartedly with an astonishing 40-page feature, labelling it "the greatest beat-'em-up ever" and "the greatest console port-over of all time". They quite liked it then…





Nexus

ANOTHER IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

#63



» C64
» BUG-BYTE
» 1986

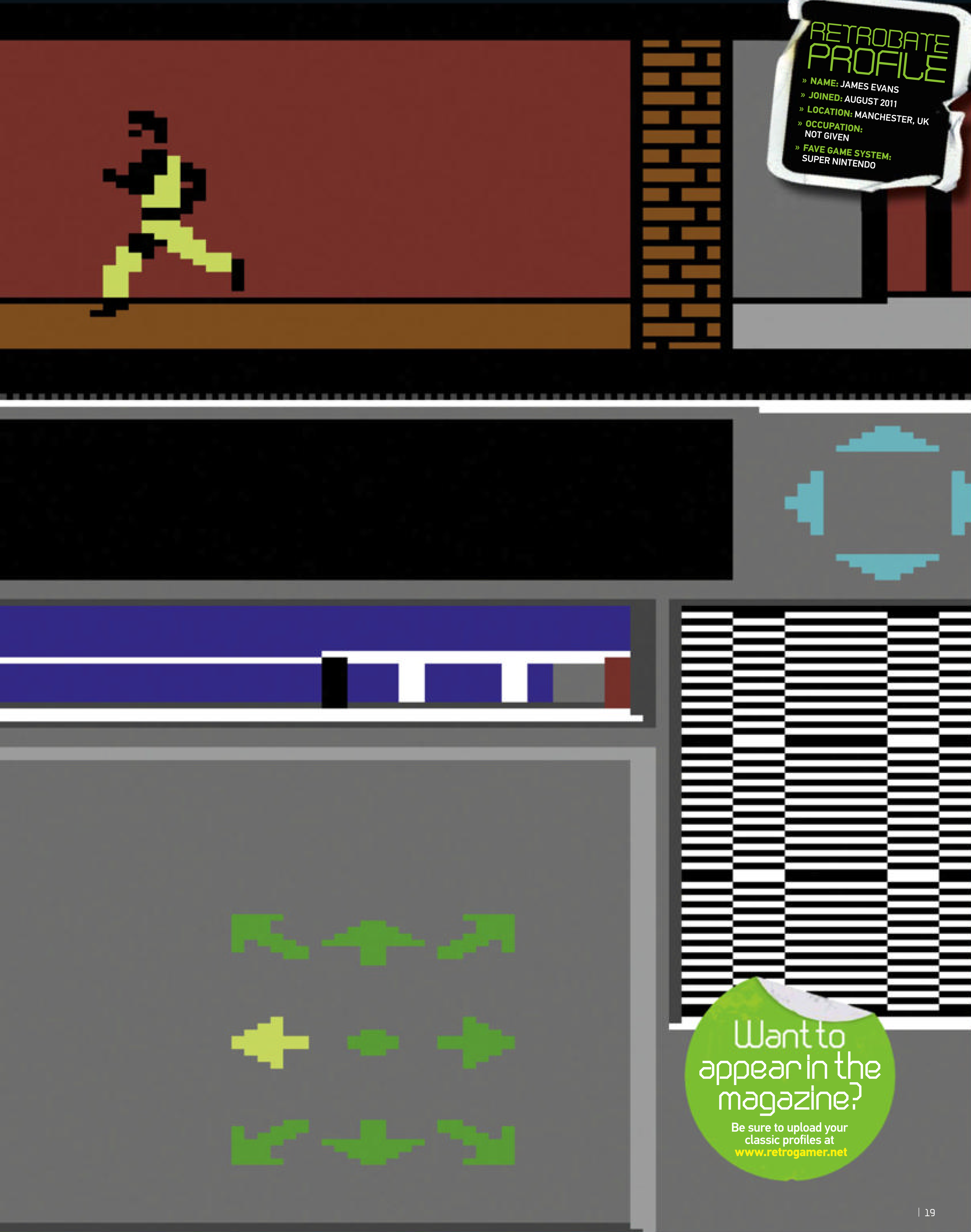
Starting on a jet ski approaching land fast before BAM! Welcome to *Nexus*. You get up and chat to the first woman you come across, who handily shows you the passage to utter confusion! The first impression I got from playing *Nexus* was 'what the hell am I supposed to do?!'

It eventually becomes clear that you are to infiltrate the facility you have just arrived at via underground tunnels. From here you need to search room after room to find the secret data and rescue your friend before making your escape.

The controls in the game are quite well mapped out – the actual gameplay screen is cut down to accommodate the map and the controller layouts, but this does help. If anyone has played this, you will understand when I say 'thank god for the stun gun – else you're basically knackered!'

Kick the wrong person in the face and you will spend the entire game fighting off each and every digitised character in it… and then you bump into the man in black… Just keep running! Search the lockers and run on! Before you know it, you will be back in prison from having your head kicked in and you then get to repeat the process.

In reading this it doesn't sound that exciting… but the original layout and the sheer mystery of what the hell is going on makes it totally worthwhile. Once you get your rhythm and get in the groove of the different floors and which characters to avoid, the game becomes very addictive. Gameplay wise it is nothing but fun and graphically it functions very well. It's recommended for an evening of confusion.



RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** JAMES EVANS
» **JOINED:** AUGUST 2011
» **LOCATION:** MANCHESTER, UK
» **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** SUPER NINTENDO

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Its lack of success in Japan and the US has turned Sega's 8-bit console into something of a forgotten masterpiece. This ignorance has resulted in it becoming highly collectible, with a superb library of interesting ports and excellent exclusives. Adam Buchanan explains why you need Sega's console in your collection





SEGA Master



» **Manufacturer:** Sega » **Models:** Master System, Master System II, Master System 3, Master System Evolution » **Launched:** 1985 » **Country of origin:** Japan

System

Master System The Collector's Guide



» Sega followed up the Master System with this ugly-looking second model. We've no idea what Sega was thinking…



» The Master System II was cheaply made, so you won't find an RGB connection on it.

» These excellent retro-styled panels not only look cool, but explain how to hook up your beloved machine to a TV.



» Sonic had a pretty good showing on Sega's Master System, with a selection of genuinely great games.



Why it's collectable

After a couple of false starts entering the console market, Sega's third attempt – dubbed the Mark III – would eventually pave the way for things to come. Although the new console was pushed aside by the runaway success of the Nintendo Famicom in Japan, Sega had high hopes for it elsewhere. With revamped looks and rebranded as the 'Master System', it was unleashed on North American shores; however, Nintendo was showing no sign of slowing down there either. This left the Master System one relatively untouched territory in which to triumph: Europe.

As the hefty price tag of the Nintendo NES – coupled with lacklustre marketing – left a huge gap in the British gaming market, Sega began preparing an unforgettable ambush. Its pre-Christmas ad campaign in 1987 had gamers lusting after the promised near-perfect arcade gameplay, something that was never guaranteed by home computer coin-op conversions. For just £99 at launch, the attraction of instant-loading accurate arcade ports of *Hang-On*, *After Burner* and *Space Harrier* were hard to resist – and so a Master System was soon installed in countless households.

During this time the European Master System software library expanded to nearly 300 licensed titles, including some fantastic arcade conversions, the beginnings of franchises such as *Alex Kidd*, and even 8-bit interpretations of Mega Drive titles such as *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Streets Of Rage*. In addition, the glowing PAL selection featured dozens of exclusive releases such as *The Lucky Dime Caper*, *Asterix*, *Ninja Gaiden*, *Master Of Darkness* and *Power Strike II*.

In comparison, North American owners had little to shout about, as publishers began focusing their efforts on the European market. This unusual turn of events left just over 100 games released within the US. However, it only got stranger from there. The Master System's native Japan was neglected further, with an even smaller catalogue of titles. Despite the fact that these regional differences created a handful of desirable import-only titles, Europeans today find themselves fending off a flurry of competition from abroad for their own exclusive 8-bit classics.

Looking back over the course of the Master System's life, the desirability of the console today wasn't determined solely by the output of game developers all those years ago. Throughout the course of its continental crusade, the system not only saw various game-enhancing accessories, such as state-of-the-art 3-D Glasses, but a revised model of the hardware in 1990. The Master System II dropped the hard edges of the previous decade's design and included the definitive *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* as a built-in game – a clincher for any late adopters of 8-bit videogame systems. Collectors today will find themselves hunting the rarer variation of this revision, one which left Sega's Eighties mascot behind and replaced his built-in game with *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

Many years later, after an impressive run and slow retirement, the Master System's European lifespan would come to an end with one final game, released in



» Alex Kidd used to be Sega's mascot before Sonic arrived, so he stars in a lot of games on Sega's 8-bit console.



» The Sega Cards were rereleased on normal cartridges, making the originals highly collectable now.



» A selection of magazines from the time that used to cover the Master System. Interestingly, *C&VG* called it the 'Sega'.



» Sega Cards held less information than a normal Master System cartridge.

Did you know?

■ In 1984 an add-on was released for Sega's SG-1000 known as the Card Catcher. This enhancement featured a small slot, the size of several credit cards stacked together, which accepted the newly introduced My Card format. These pocket-sized releases were intended to reduce the cost of manufacturing games, compared to cartridges, while offering up to 32KB of ROM. Sega decided to build this technology into the Master System for launch, but unfortunately by then it was showing its age: as cartridges were generously providing up to 512KB of ROM, only the smallest and most basic games remained in this once promising format.

1996. This title's existence in major European markets, however, remained unknown until much later on. Although it was an official release, *Les Schtroumpfs Autour du Monde* (aka *The Smurfs Travel The World*) wasn't discovered until early 2000, when a Finnish tourist visiting the Czech Republic stumbled across a handful of copies. Initially unaware of the small fortune he had uncovered, his dead-end research into the title and subsequent discussions online made it very clear he needed to return to this gold mine to amass his fortune. Needless to say, this extreme rarity soon became the holy grail for Master System collectors, with just a few copies circulating worldwide – many of which originated from this initial haul. Surprisingly enough, this final European title would not be the last the world saw of Sega's 8-bit system.

Several thousand miles away in Brazil, a company by the name of Tec Toy (now Tectoy) began distributing the Master System in 1989 – and has continued to do so ever since. Even today, the prehistoric hardware continues to sell in surprisingly large quantities through the many revised models Tec Toy has manufactured, most of which arrive with hundreds of built-in games. The true desirability of these Brazilian products, however, resides with the Master System software which was distributed in the Southern Hemisphere around two decades ago. Tec Toy not only released a multitude of Portuguese translated games, but also over 20 exclusive titles which have since become highly collectable worldwide. This selection featured the only 8-bit Sega versions of *Street Fighter II* and *Fire & Ice*; conversions of Game Gear titles such as *Legend Of Illusion*, *Baku Baku* and *Dynamite Headdy*; and also several unique titles including *Férias Frustradas do Picapau* and *Sítio do Picapau Amarelo*.

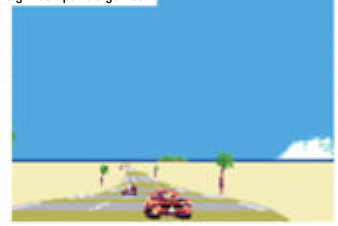
Small blue creatures and South American imports aside, the most unusual and troublesome collectable available for Master System fans dwells in the last place you'd think to look: the US release of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. While appearing to be nothing more than the European version imported for general sale in North America, this US version of the timeless classic differentiates itself with an additional UPC barcode sticker on the back of the game's case. Although most will cast aside this extreme case as being one for the die-hards, those aiming for the definitive full set of US releases face a difficult task ahead – contacting sellers and requesting photographs of the reverse side of their purchasable items. A quest that could yield a significant bargain, or total loss of sanity.

All things considered, the Master System holds a lot of history and oddities to lure in late adopters and second-time-around fanatics. Given that it's one of the few consoles which was focused on the European market, PAL collectors for once can bask in the glory of knowing that the better titles the system has to offer aren't several thousand miles away, nor locked behind import restrictions. But as if that weren't enough already, the final beauty of Sega's 8-bit system is that a large proportion of the console's library, including some of the definitive titles, on a good day, can still be had for mere pennies – at least for now...





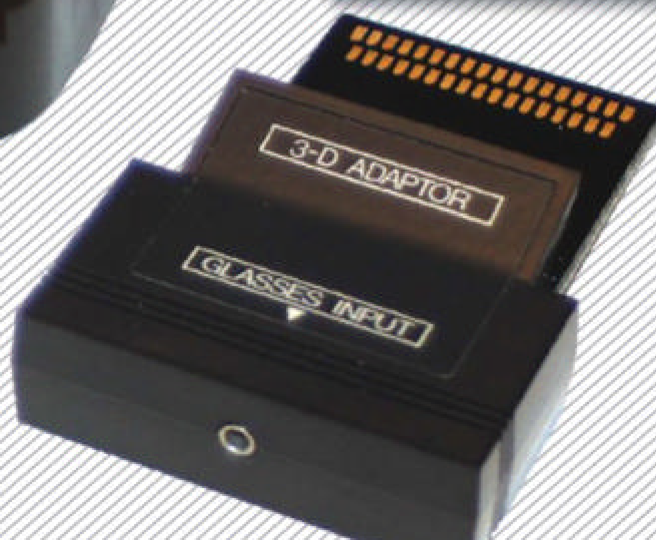
» [SMS] *Space Harrier 3-D* was a Master System exclusive.



» [SMS] *Out Run 3D* is one of eight compatible games.



» [SMS] The arcade version of *Line Of Fire* uses a first-person viewpoint.



SegaScope 3-D Glasses

The three-dimensional gaming we've all grown accustomed to on modern gaming platforms is actually nothing new. By the late 1980s, Sega had already been to the next dimension and back, with the Master System's very own SegaScope 3-D Glasses.

Using a technique known as an active shutter 3D system, Sega's accessory would display the on-screen visuals intended for the left eye while obscuring the right eye's view, then quickly reverse the process by presenting an image for the right-eye while blocking the left eye. This cycle would then repeat over and over again at a speed much faster than the human eye could register, tricking the brain into interpreting the two images as a stereoscopic 3D picture – leaping out of a once flat television.

Although a simple process, to achieve this effect the 3-D Glasses required a constant connection to the Master System. To sync the on-screen action with the active shutter visuals, the wire leaving the headset would need to be plugged into the card slot found on the original Master System console – something which would in turn leave the system's cartridge slot open for software to run from. This solution was anything but future-proof: by the time the revised Master System II console had arrived, the once significant card slot had been removed from that sleek update, as had Sega's focus on the technology.

While the Glasses were an impressive piece of kit, sales were soon dwindling. The line-up of compatible software would only ever reach a grand total of seven specially developed titles, with one additional game offering a 'hidden' 3D mode. Among this small count, several arcade classics such as *Space Harrier*, *Out Run* and *Zaxxon* were impressively adapted to make use of the added depth and new functionality.

This commercial failure, however, was not exclusive to Sega. The Famicom 3D System, Nintendo's equivalent to the Master System's 3-D Glasses, saw an equal number of compatible games made available shortly before being swept under the carpet – very much like the Virtual Boy would be in years to come. Even the Vectrex had its own 3D Imager accessory – which predated Sega's technology by a good few years – but sadly it fell victim to the American videogame crash of 1983.

Finding a pair of these 3-D Glasses in working order today is a difficult feat, something that can be attributed to ever-growing demand. Some of the most common issues found with adopting these glasses second-hand are the prevalent cracked hinges and snapped temples, a result of Sega's flawed design. Only those with a head the size of a small child's will feel safe wearing this vintage headwear without fear of causing damage. There is, however, a solution at hand to combat these head-size issues, as the technology used decades ago is still around today. Believe it or not, most brand new active shutter 3D glasses available (with an accompanying wire ending in a 3.5mm jack plug) should work once connected to the adaptor in the Master System's card slot.

...AND THE REST



01. Pro Action Replay

■ Following the successful release of cheat cartridges on the Commodore 64, Datel moved its focus onto home consoles. One of its first efforts, a Master System version of the Pro Action Replay, was only released in small quantities in Europe. Those hoping for quick access to infinite lives should look towards the easier-to-find German version, while die-hard collectors may want to scout out the more desirable UK version instead.

02. Handle Controller

■ Quite possibly the most unusual and collectable accessory for the Master System, this replica steering wheel and flight stick hybrid was a short-lived 1989 release. It's incredibly difficult to find a working one today: not only was it poorly made, but its accompanying (and vital for use) detachable wire is easy to misplace.

03. Sega Light Phaser

■ While the Nintendo NES may have had the bright toy-coloured Zapper Light Gun, Sega produced a more realistic-looking weapon for its Master System. The Sega Light Phaser was compatible with 13 titles and was, strangely enough, a Western exclusive accessory – one often bundled with the system and harder to find boxed alone.

04. Sega Control Stick

■ In the decade leading up to the release of the Master System, gamers worldwide had grown accustomed to the standard layout of coin-op controls. So for one of the leading arcade machine makers of the day to create a reversed left-handed arcade stick for the home console was nothing short of baffling.

05. Rapid Fire Unit

■ In an attempt to add more firepower to our gaming accessories, Sega expanded upon its standard control pad with an add-on which introduced auto-fire functionality. This small block sat between the console and joypad, offering two independent switches to control which buttons were turbocharged.

06. Master Gear Converter

■ With the Master System and Game Gear sharing near identical hardware, the small cartridge slot on the handheld was the only thing preventing console software from being enjoyed on the go. The Master Gear Converter (aka Gear Master) pass-though device remedied this by providing a larger slot for Master System titles to fit into the Game Gear.

07. Sega Sports Pad

■ One of the few accessories to skip out on a European release was the trackball-equipped Sega Sports Pad. Although promising a precise 360° movement range, this three-game-compatible peripheral failed to deliver such accuracy.

SEGA Master System The Collector's Guide

TOP GAMES TO PLAY



Alex Kidd In Miracle World

■ To build-in one of the greatest platformers to date with its console was a stroke of genius from Sega, as no gamer should be without this gem.

Phantasy Star

■ While the Master System may only have a had a handful of RPGs released for it, *Phantasy Star* makes up for the console's quest-heavy shortcomings by offering a legend to last a lifetime.

Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

■ It's a rare occurrence to see an 8-bit title outshine its 16-bit counterpart, but that's exactly what this Disney licensed platformer from Sega managed to do for many.

Sonic The Hedgehog

■ Developer Ancient was well aware of the Master System's hardware limitations when tasked with bringing the blue hedgehog to the 8-bit world – something which really paid off.

Bubble Bobble

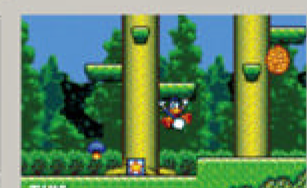
■ As far as arcade ports go, Taito's classic on the Master System was not only a near perfect conversion, but also one with additional hidden rooms and endings.

PLAY THESE NEXT



Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap

■ The fourth game in the series (strangely named *III*) had a lot to live up to – something it did in style with gorgeous visuals and fluid gameplay. While the use of the term is generally frowned upon, there is no better description for it than being an early example of the 'Metroidvania' genre.



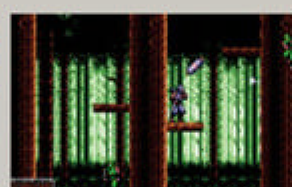
The Lucky Dime Caper Starring Donald Duck

■ While Mickey Mouse's *Castle Of Illusion* stole the limelight, Donald Duck's adventure is just as worthy of the 8-bit Disney crown. His globetrotting quest to reclaim his kidnapped nephews and Uncle Scrooge's Number One Dime further proved what the Master System was capable of.



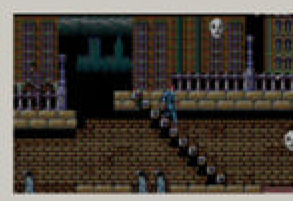
Golvellius: Valley Of Doom

■ Created for the MSX range of computers in 1987, *Golvellius* was Compile's fantastic answer to Nintendo's *Zelda II*. After licensing the following year, Sega went on to release a remake for its 8-bit system – one that built upon the original with enhanced graphics and new in-game maps.



Ninja Gaiden

■ Much to North American gamers' surprise and delight, Tecmo's timeless *Ninja Gaiden* series was not exclusive to the Nintendo NES, though only for a brief moment. Sega's 8-bit range of systems saw two equally difficult challenges which both featured superior visuals to their rival NES counterparts.



Master Of Darkness

■ Within moments of controlling Dr Social in his investigation of a series of London murders, a certain iconic castle-based-quest may come to mind. Released six years after Konami's *Castlevania*, *Master Of Darkness*, if anything, is Sega's tribute to the 2D Dracula-hunting action-adventure, and it was far from shy in its admiration.

TOP GAMES TO IMPORT



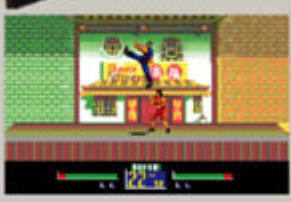
Baku Baku
■ To think that the 32-bit Sega Saturn release *Baku Baku* was remade for Sega's 8-bit range of consoles is somewhat puzzling. Nevertheless it is a must-have import from South America.

King's Quest – Quest For The Crown
■ The North American library of Master System software may be lacking, but it did receive a port of Sierra's iconic entry into the adventure game genre with *King's Quest*.

Legend Of Illusion – Starring Mickey Mouse
■ The finale of Mickey's trilogy of early Sega outings may have skipped out on an European release (if you don't include the Sega Game Gear port), leaving the Brazilian import a hot property.

ALF
■ Of all the fictional characters worthy of receiving the video game treatment, Sega somehow landed with *ALF* – a laughable, although enjoyable, attempt to immortalise the Alien Life Form of TV fame.

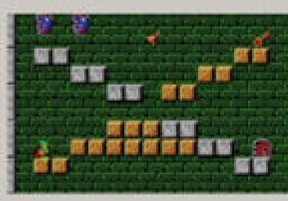
Dynamite Headdy
■ Originally ported to the Sega Game Gear, the Southern Hemisphere's finest distributor, Tec Toy, secured the rights to distribute a port of Treasure's bonkers platformer on the Master System.



Virtua Fighter Animation
■ Given that *Virtua Fighter* is known for its amazing visuals and ahead-of-its time gameplay, taking it back to Sega's 8-bit console was ambitious. While it may have lacked the 3D element and controls of its 32-bit equivalent, the newly introduced story element further proved there was life left in the then decade-old system.



Battletoads In Battlemaniacs
■ After having its imminent 1994 European release canned, the Master System port of the *Battletoads* sequel flew south – in an unfinished state, with several stages lacking music and others riddled with bugs. The already infuriating turbo tunnel level contained more obstacles than usual, many of them hidden from view.



Solomon's Key
■ Following its arrival in the arcades, Tecmo's coin-op hit made its way onto just about every platform going. The Sega Master System version of the fantastic puzzler, however, ended up as an import exclusive for some unknown reason – leaving gamers settling for the European Nintendo NES port in its absence.



BMX Trial – Alex Kidd
■ One of Japan's few exclusive releases was another title in the once prolific *Alex Kidd* series. Casting aside his platforming antics, *BMX Trial* was a top-down stunt playground mixed with elements of *Enduro Racer*. What made it more interesting, though, was that it required the *Pong*-esque Paddle Controller – another Asian rarity.



High School! Kimengumi
■ Based on the manga series of the same name, this unusual school-'em-up was quite different to the ZX Spectrum's *Skool Daze* and *Back To Skool*. Instead of stealing report cards from the headteacher's office, the player had to capture the five misfit junior high school boys who made up the troublesome 'Kimengumi' club.

SEGA Master System The Collector's Guide

TOP RAREST PAL GAMES



Les Schtroumpfs Autour du Monde

■ Being the very last title to grace the Master System, this Central European release from 1996 is every bit as rare as the elusive blue Smurfs it stars.



Buggy Run

■ *RC Pro-Am* may be remembered fondly as the definitive isometric racer; however, Sega's 8-bit console had its very own diagonal driver known as *Buggy Run*.

Home Alone

■ Macaulay Culkin's exemplary holiday blockbuster was done little justice in the videogame department, an offence that wasn't exclusive to its shambolic Master System release.





Masters Of Combat

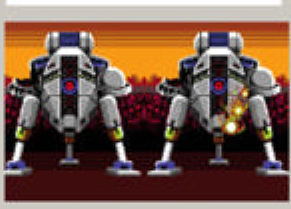
■ Although many had failed to bring the fighting genre to the Master System, SIMS' ambitious, albeit late, effort in 1993 proved how far the then already-dated console could be pushed.



Power Strike II

■ Not to be confused with the Game Gear title of the same name, *Power Strike II* is one of the more expensive European Master System releases, but worth every penny it commands.

GET THESE NEXT



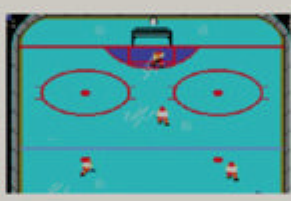
Assault City: Light Phaser Version

■ Despite its cursor based on-screen shooting action, 1990's *Assault City* didn't quite feel right – thanks to its glaring lack of support for the Light Phaser accessory. Sega too was aware of this issue and an updated version of the title was soon released, sporting a huge red silhouette of the peripheral on the game's box.



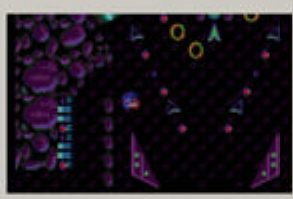
Asterix And The Great Rescue

■ For the third and final *Asterix* title on the 8-bit console, Sega handed over the responsibility to Core Design. While its cross-platform release may not have been up to scratch compared with Sega's prior releases, it eventually became a considerable rarity, though more common in the country the Gauls originated from.



Championship Hockey

■ Two years before *Championship Hockey* skated onto the scene, SIMS set the standard for puck-smashing simulators for the years to come with *Slap Shot*. US Gold's 1992 attempt, however, somehow managed to slip on the ice with its jerky animation, sprite flickering and horrific AI. A title best suited to the sin bin.



Sonic Spinball

■ While most of Sega's 8-bit ports of Mega Drive titles were handled well, something went amiss with Sonic's pinball spin-off. Either the Master System was a little underpowered to handle the fast-paced action, or the game's programmers were a little too lazy to fix the wobbly camera and questionable physics in play.

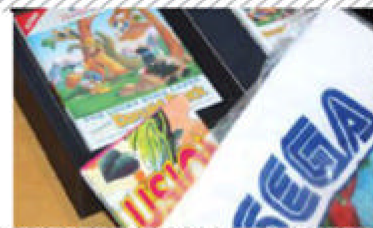


Ultimate Soccer

■ With the Master System port of *Sensible Soccer* leaving a lot to be desired, the goal was left wide open for a rival to hit the back of the net. *Ultimate Soccer* was Rare's bold attempt to dethrone Sensible Software, and an admirable one at that. Being a late release on the 8-bit console, it's understandably rare today.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

After a super-rare PAL Master System game? Then this is the one that you should be trying to add to your collection



What makes it hard to find?

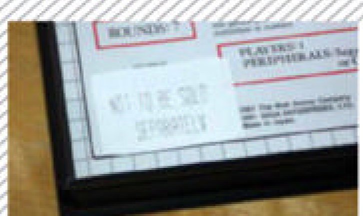
■ With disposable casing, a once fashionable T-shirt and outdated audio cassette, it's somewhat understandable that the components of this bumper pack of '90s nostalgia have since been discarded. While locating these contents may be tricky enough, finding a set with all its feathers in good condition is a much harder task.





What makes it so special?

■ In what might have been the first limited-edition Sega product to hit European shelves, Disney teamed up with the videogame giant to celebrate Donald Duck's home console debut. This combined effort in 1991 saw an alluring box set made available in limited quantities, packed to the brim with goodies.



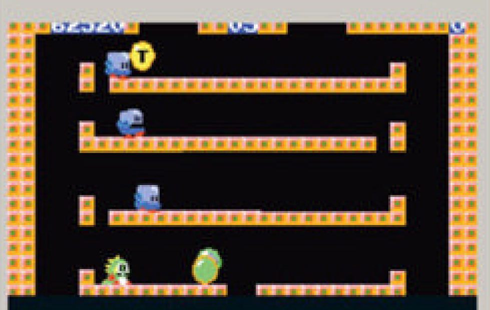
Why is it so expensive?

■ Unlike today's mass-produced 'limited' offerings, the *Lucky Dime Caper* box set really was dispatched in small numbers. The fortunate few lucky enough to own this exotic rarity are more than eligible to join Uncle Scrooge's Fortune 500 equivalent of videogame collections.

Master System **The Collector's Guide**

THE PAL MASTER SYSTEM GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN

- Ace Of Aces
- Action Fighter
- Addams Family, The
- Aerial Assault
- After Burner
- Air Rescue
- Aladdin (Disney's)
- Alex Kidd In Miracle World
- Alex Kidd In Shinobi World
- Alex Kidd: High Tech World
- Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars
- Alien 3
- Alien Storm
- Alien Syndrome
- Altered Beast
- America Baseball
- American Pro Football
- Andre Agassi Tennis
- Arcade Smash Hits
- Assault City
- Assault City: Light Phaser Version
- Asterix
- Asterix And The Great Rescue
- Asterix And The Secret Mission
- Astro Warrior / Pit Pot
- Aztec Adventure
- Back To The Future II
- Back To he Future III
- Bank Panic
- Basketball Nightmare
- Batman Returns
- Battle Out Run
- Black Belt
- Blade Eagle 3-D
- Bomber Raid
- Bonanza Brothers
- Bram Stoker's Dracula
- Bubble Bobble
- Buggy Run
- California Games
- California Games II
- Captain Silver
- Casino Game
- Castle Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse
- Champions Of Europe
- Championship Hockey
- Chase HQ
- Cheese Cat-astrophe Starring Speedy Gonzales
- Choplifter



Bubble Bobble

- Chuck Rock
- Chuck Rock II: Son Of Chuck
- Cloud Master
- Columns
- Cool Spot
- Cosmic Spacehead
- Cyber Shinobi, The
- Cyborg Hunter
- Daffy Duck In Hollywood
- Danan: The Jungle Fighter
- Dead Angle
- Deep Duck Trouble Starring Donald Duck
- Desert Speedtrap
- Desert Strike
- Dick Tracy
- Double Dragon
- Double Hawk
- Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine
- Dragon Crystal
- Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story
- Dynamite Duke
- Dynamite Dux
- E-SWAT
- Ecco The Dolphin
- Enduro Racer
- F-16 Fighter
- F1
- Fantastic Dizzy
- Fantasy Zone
- Fantasy Zone II
- Fantasy Zone: The Maze
- Fire & Forget II
- Flash, The
- Flintstones, The
- Forgotten Worlds
- G-LOC: Air Battle
- Gain Ground
- Galaxy Force
- Gangster Town
- Gauntlet
- Ghost House
- Ghostbusters
- Ghouls'n Ghosts
- Global Defense
- Global Gladiators
- Golden Axe
- Golden Axe Warrior
- Golfamania
- Golvellius: Valley Of Doom
- GP Rider
- Great Baseball
- Great Basketball
- Great Football
- Great Golf
- Great Soccer
- Great Volleyball
- Hang On
- Heavyweight Champ
- Heroes Of The Lance
- Home Alone
- Impossible Mission
- Incredible Crash Test Dummies, The
- Incredible Hulk, The
- Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade
- James Bond 007: The Duel
- James Pond 2: Codename Robocod
- Joe Montana Football
- Jungle Book (Disney's), The
- Jurassic Park
- Kenseiden
- Klax
- KO Boxing (George Foreman's)
- Krusty's Fun House
- Kung Fu Kid
- Land Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse
- Laser Ghost
- Lemmings
- Line Of Fire
- Lion King, The
- Lord Of The Sword
- Lucky Dime Caper Starring Donald Duck, The
- Marble Madness
- Marksman Shooting / Trap Shooting / Safari Hunt
- Master Games 1
- Master Of Darkness
- Masters Of Combat
- Maze Hunter 3-D
- Mercs
- Micro Machines
- Miracle Warriors: Seal Of The Dark Lord
- Missile Defense 3-D
- Monopoly
- Moonwalker (Michael Jackson's)
- Mortal Kombat
- Mortal Kombat II
- Ms Pac-Man
- My Hero
- NewZealand Story, The
- Ninja Gaiden
- Ninja, The
- Olympic Gold: Barcelona '92
- Operation Wolf
- Ottifants, The
- Out Run
- Out Run 3-D
- Out Run Europa
- Pacmania
- Paperboy
- Parlour Games
- Penguin Land
- PGA Tour Golf
- Phantasy Star
- Pit-Fighter
- Populous
- Poseidon Wars 3-D
- Power Strike
- Power Strike II
- Predator 2
- Prince Of Persia
- Pro Wrestling
- Psychic World
- Psycho Fox

EXTREMELY RARE Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

VERY RARE Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

RARE You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

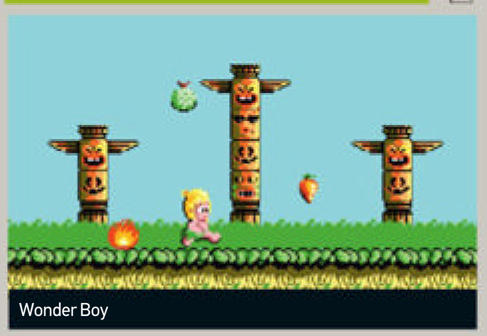
UNCOMMON You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

COMMON Always just a click away for the average collector.

VERY COMMON So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.


Shinobi

- Putt & Putter
- Quartet
- R-Type
- RC Grand Prix
- Rainbow Islands
- Rambo III
- Rampage
- Rampart
- Rastan
- Renegade
- Rescue Mission
- Road Rash
- RoboCop 3
- RoboCop Versus The Terminator
- Rocky
- Running Battle
- Sagaia
- Scramble Spirits
- Secret Command
- Sega Chess
- Sega World Tournament Golf
- Sensible Soccer
- Shadow Dancer: The Secret Of Shinobi
- Shadow Of The Beast
- Shanghai
- Shinobi
- Shooting Gallery
- Simpsons, The: Bart Vs The Space Mutants
- Simpsons, The: Bart Vs The World
- Slap Shot
- Smurfs 2, The: Travel The World
- Smurfs, The
- Sonic The Hedgehog Chaos
- Sonic Spinball
- Sonic The Hedgehog
- Sonic The Hedgehog 2
- Space Gun
- Space Harrier
- Space Harrier 3-D
- Special Criminal Investigation
- Speedball
- Speedball 2
- Spellcaster
- Spider-Man Vs The Kingpin
- Spider-Man: Return Of The Sinister Six
- Spy Vs Spy
- Star Wars
- Streets Of Rage
- Streets Of Rage II
- Strider
- Strider II
- Submarine Attack
- Summer Games
- Super Kick Off
- Super Monaco GP
- Super Monaco GP II (Ayrton Senna's)
- Super Off Road
- Super Smash TV
- Super Space Invaders
- Super Tennis
- Superman: The Man Of Steel
- T2: The Arcade Game
- Taz-Mania
- Tecmo World Cup '93
- Teddy Boy
- Tennis Ace
- Terminator 2: Judgment Day
- Terminator, The
- Thunder Blade
- Time Soldiers
- Top & Jerry: The Movie
- TransBot
- Trivial Pursuit: Genus Edition
- Ultima IV: Quest Of The Avatar
- Ultimate Soccer
- Vigilante
- Wanted
- Wimbledon
- Wimbledon II
- Winter Olympics: Lillehammer '94
- Wolfchild
- Wonder Boy
- Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap
- Wonder Boy In Monster Land
- Wonder Boy In Monster World
- World Class Leader Board
- World Cup Italia '90
- World Cup USA '94
- World Games
- World Grand Prix
- World Soccer
- WWF Wrestlemania Steel Cage Challenge
- Xenon 2: Megablast
- Ys: The Vanished Omens
- Zaxxon 3-D
- Zillion
- Zillion II: The Tri Formation
- Zool


Wonder Boy

Collector Q&A

We speak to James Costelloabout his impressive collection



So what drew you to collecting Sega Master System games and hardware?
It was the main games console I had as a kid and the one I have the fondest memories of. Back then, however, I would only be able to get a few games per year, so once I rediscovered my love for the system and realised I could get most games for a couple of quid I was hooked!

What does the Master System offer over the NES?
I did own a NES at one point and quite enjoyed it but the Master System is where my memories are. You can argue all day about which is technically better or which has the best games but at the end of the day it comes down to personal preference.

How long have you been collecting for?
My Master System collection started in late 2005 and stopped in 2009. Real life took over and I decided I needed to save towards getting my own house and there really is no rush when you're collecting something from the past. Since I have bought my own house now, I am collecting again but at a much slower pace than before.

Which game or piece of hardware has eluded you?
The Master System II cover variation of Sonic The Hedgehog 2. It's a difficult item to find on eBay due to the ordinary version being so common. Hardware-wise, the Master System II *Lion King* set, I've only ever seen one photo of it and don't know anyone who owns it. Other than these, I keep a mental list of items I'd still like to find.

Which item could you not live without?
I have lots of rare and unusual items, but I could not live without the game *Putt & Putter*. I love playing it and the one in my collection is the one I rented countless times from the local video shop – it still has all the rental stickers and holds sentimental value.

What is the most you have spent on a single Master System item and why?
I've always preferred to hunt for bargains: part of of the fun of collecting is finding hidden treasure. I think the most I have spent on one item is my US Kiosk unit (PD-W Unit); it is like a Master System version of the Nintendo M82. It wasn't actually expensive to buy but once I had paid shipping and customs charges, it came to £180!

How does your other half feel about your impressive collection?
She doesn't seem to mind it at all; it stays in one room which isn't used for anything else. I think if I was spending too much time and money on collecting and compromising on our quality of life then she would understandably be unhappy.

What advice would you give other readers interested in collecting Master System games?
Don't rush into it – take your time to track down bargains, as it's much more satisfying. Join some forums and get trading with other collectors; you will meet some great people.

If you could go back in time and buy one Master System game upon its release, which would it be?
Land Of Illusion, because I never had it back in the day and it's an excellent platform game I missed out on.

Finally, Sonic or Alex Kidd?
Always going to be Alex Kidd for me.

* Pal rarity list courtesy of www.retrocollect.com

A MOMENT WITH…

Gary Winnick



The co-creator of Maniac Mansion stops by to discuss getting into the industry, his favourite artists and Bad Dreams, his new graphic novel

Who is Gary Winnick?

Gary Winnick's first job in the games industry was for Lucasfilm Games. Starting off as the studio's only animator and artist, he went on to become co-designer of *Maniac Mansion*, one of the company's most popular games. After leaving LucasArts in 1993 he worked at Spectrum Holobyte. He's currently working on his own personal project, a graphic novel called *Bad Dreams*.

How did you become an artist and move into the games industry?

I was always interested in comics and animation, visual design, character development and storytelling from an early age. I practised drawing comics and got involved in comic fandom drawing for a number of fanzines. That led to an apprenticeship with Neal Adams at Continuity Studios in New York. Soon after, I returned to California as the personal computer revolution began. Santa Cruz (where I was raised) is just over the hill from Silicon Valley. I was pretty intrigued by the technology, so I got an Atari 800 and started figuring out the graphics.

Is it true you started your career at Atari?

I heard they were looking to train artists to create computer graphics for games, instead of relying on programmers who used to do it all. Atari was so close, I went in for a couple of interviews, having drawn a bunch of monsters on graph paper (I really had no idea what I was doing at the time) and they offered me an animator's job. The initial projects I worked on were for the 800: arcade conversions of *Donkey Kong* and *Dig Dug*. Also an original game based on the *Superman III* movie.

How did you get started at Lucasfilm Games? Was it a dream job for you?

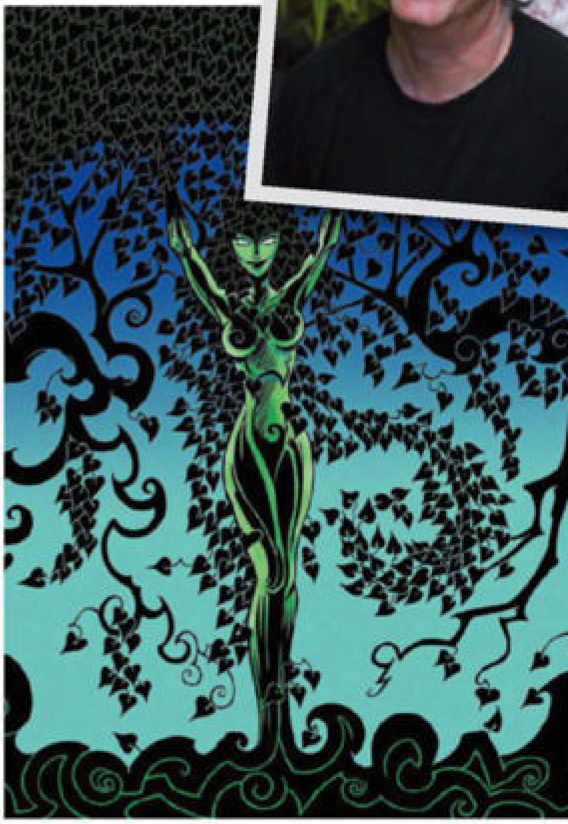
I had a friend, Charlie Kellner, [who] was on the first Mac development team at Apple. He was also a fan of my fantasy and sci-fi fanzine work. Soon after, he took a job with the start-up Lucasfilm Games Division. He recommended me for their first artist position. After meeting the team at SIGGRAPH, I went to San Rafael to interview and created the Jaggi design and animation for *Rescue* [*On Fractalus!*], after which they offered me a full-time job. And Absolutely Yes! – it was a dream come true for me at the time.

How was co-designing *Maniac Mansion*?

Probably the most fun I ever had. Aside from being young and idealistic, I felt like I had been given access to the biggest/best playground any kid could ever want. We were working at one of the coolest companies in the known universe at the time, getting to do whatever we wanted creatively. On top of that, I got to work with Ron [Gilbert] who shared the same warped sense of humour and vision for the product.

Tell us about your latest venture, *Bad Dreams*?

I've been wanting to get back to my graphic storytelling roots for a while. When it comes to games it's become such a major studio undertaking. I wanted to get something started on my own, see it take on a shape and life of its own, on my own; at least enough to where I could show off the look, story and characters. Possibly to develop and expand interactively beyond that once the groundwork of the comic was complete. I've managed to get through around 150 pages of that which we're currently serialising on iBooks and Amazon. So far I'm pretty happy with the results. I may be looking into Kickstarter and Indiegogo to actually print a limited-edition paper version as well as expand it on the interactive side.



» A look at the fantastic art design of *Bad Dreams*. It's available now from Amazon.

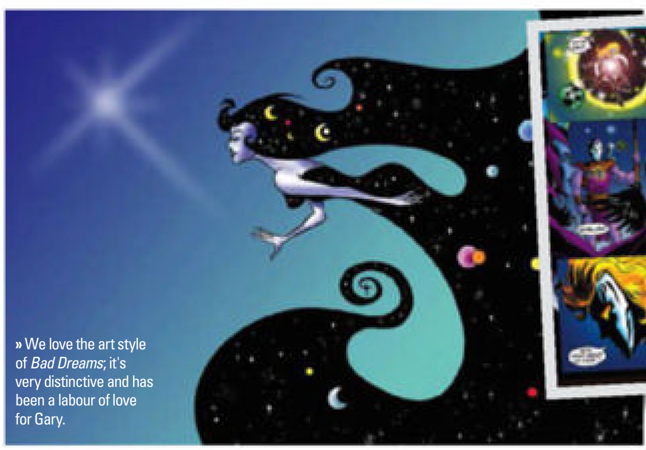
Where did the idea come from?

We all toy with the idea that things aren't really what they seem to be. I also wanted to develop a different visually striking/graphically driven style (at least for me) – and I think I've succeeded. It's sort of a *Wizard Of Oz* meets Nightmare *Before Christmas* exploration of its own mythology – as I wanted to create something I wouldn't mind my kids reading, but hopefully could appeal to an older audience as well.

What's been the reaction to the first book?

Pretty positive from those who've seen it. We feel it definitely has a unique look, although we're just getting up and running. E-publishing as a start is a reasonable cost alternative, but nowadays you really need to promote as much as possible.

You can download *Bad Dreams* from Amazon or visit the official page at **badreams.com**



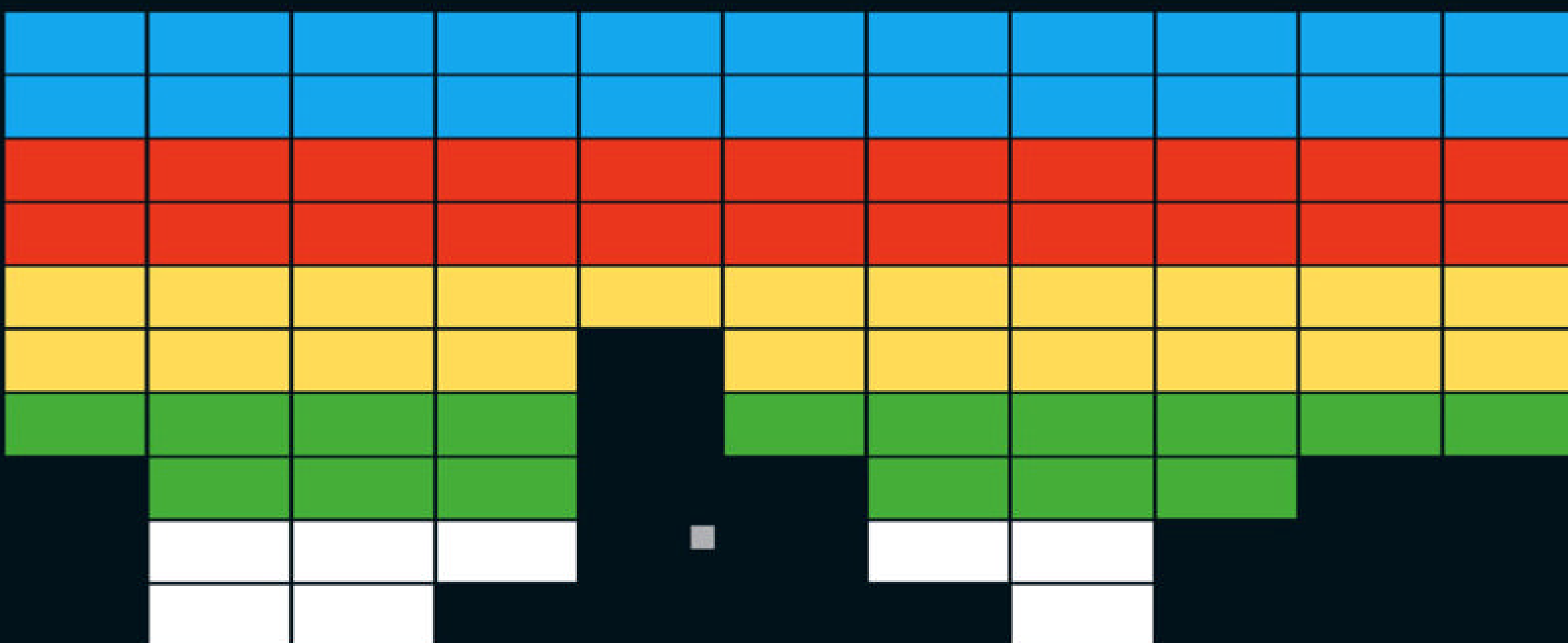
» We love the art style of *Bad Dreams*; it's very distinctive and has been a labour of love for Gary.



» This is an exclusive sneak peek at Gary's new project *Girl From No Where*, which should be available soon.


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THE STORY OF BREA



A VIDEOGAME THAT LINKS TWO OF AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS ELECTRONIC COMPANIES, BREAKOUT'S STORY IS A FASCINATING ONE. STUART HUNT HITS THE TILES AND LOOKS BACK AT THE HISTORY OF GAMING'S ORIGINAL BLOCKBUSTER

Widely seen as the first massively popular arcade and home videogame, *PONG* was Atari's first major hit. And *Breakout*, its second best-known smash from this era, is cut from a similar cloth.

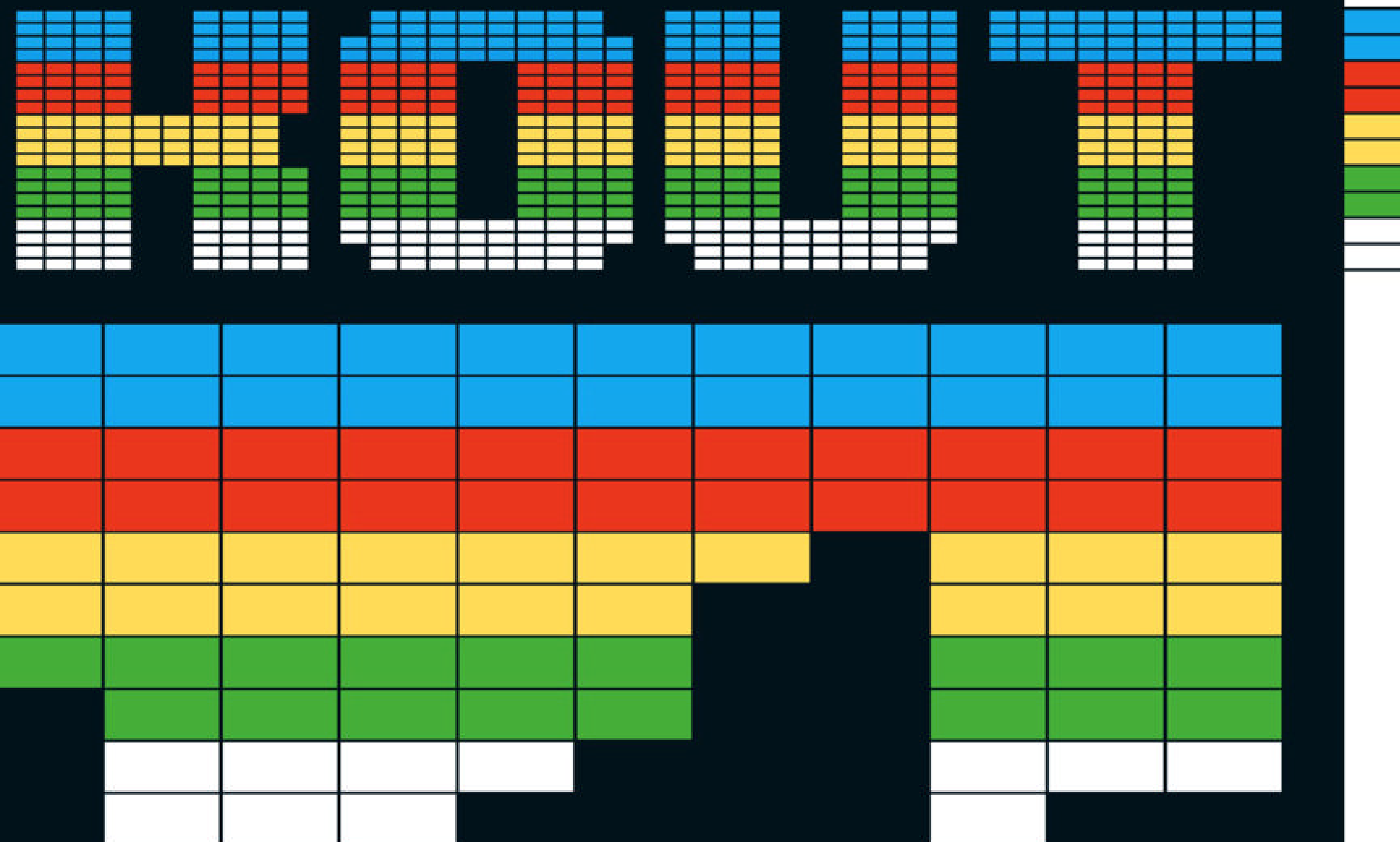
While *PONG* was famously based on the game of ping pong, *Breakout*'s roots can be traced to racquetball, a sport which had become very popular in the Seventies thanks to a fitness boom occurring around the time of its inception. When Atari founder Nolan Bushnell and *TANK* creator Steve Bristow began brainstorming ideas for a new electronic game, they saw lucrative potential in an electronic version of the indoor sport and hoped it would become Atari's most successful *PONG* variant to date.

There was, however, a concern: the worry that hitting a ball against a wall could become tedious, and players would quickly tire of its gameplay. Thinking up ways to spice it up and make the concept more exciting, they came up with the idea of having players break down a wall of bricks and destroy it completely. This deft tweak to the formula would not only give players a goal to meet but also help distance *Breakout* from its seminal forerunner.

While *Breakout*'s concept is accredited to Nolan Bushnell and Steve Bristow, the person responsible for first realising *Breakout* is Apple Computer co-founder Steve Wozniak, who was working for Hewlett Packard at the time. He got brought into the picture through his friendship with fellow Apple founder Steve Jobs, then working as a technician at Atari.

So the famous story goes, Nolan Bushnell challenged Atari's engineers to create a prototype of his racquetball game idea with as few integrated chips in it as possible. At the time, none of the engineers was interested, since many viewed bat-and-ball games as outdated. So when Jobs said he was interested in tackling the project, despite having little engineering experience, it was given to him.

In truth, Nolan and *PONG* creator Allan Alcorn gave it to Jobs as they had a feeling – though didn't let on at the time – that he would involve





» Although it was originally based on racquetball the flyer and art featured a prison theme.

Wozniak. Jobs had introduced Wozniak to the men prior to the project, when he invited him to Atari to showcase a home version of *PONG* he'd economically created with very few chips and which featured rude commentary when the ball was missed. Impressed and amused by his effort, Allan Alcorn apparently offered Wozniak a job there and then, but Wozniak declined as at the time he didn't want to quit his job at Hewlett Packard.

As Nolan and Allan had predicted, Jobs did approach Wozniak to create *Breakout*. However, Jobs wasn't completely straight up with his friend about the carrot Nolan had dangled in front of his engineers.

Nolan said he would award $100 for every chip removed from the game, and with most games typically containing between 100 and 170 chips, this posed an attractive opportunity to make a nice amount of money. Jobs reputedly told Wozniak that Atari was paying $700 (which was the normal design fee), which the men would split. A bonus of $5,000 was also paid, but wasn't mentioned. Jobs also stipulated that the project needed to be finished in four days. In truth, Atari put no such deadline on the project. He simply had a plane to catch.

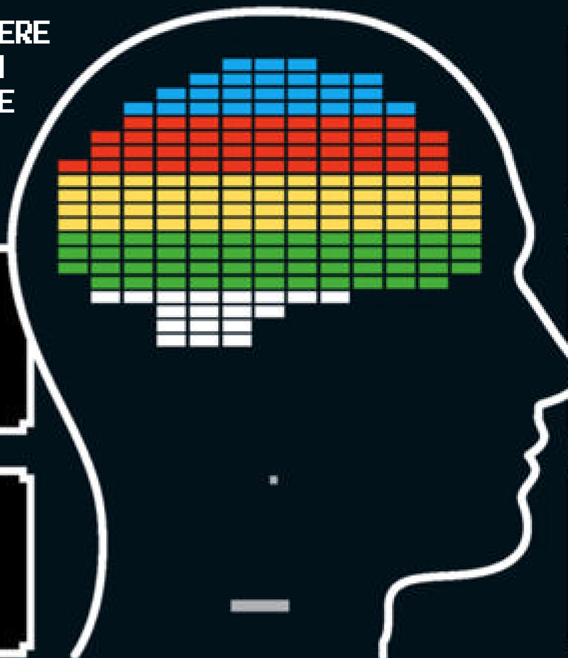
Faced with this staggeringly tight deadline (typically, at that time, hardware design would take a few months), and working from Nolan's game design explained by Jobs, four days and four sleepless nights later saw Wozniak rise to the challenge. The first version of *Breakout* was born. When the prototype turned up in Allan Alcorn's office a few days later, he was stunned. "I was quite surprised! I had no idea it was being developed at all and surprised that Jobs did it since he wasn't an engineer. I soon found out that Woz did it", he remembers.

But the turnaround wasn't the only thing that impressed him. Wozniak's *Breakout* was such an impressive piece of chip limitation that when he and Atari's engineers began scrutinising the board they were amazed by its intricacy.

"It was difficult to build the design that Woz did as normal engineers had trouble

THE BRAINS BEHIND BREAKOUT

DESPITE ITS SIMPLICITY THERE WERE MANY MEN INVOLVED IN BREAKOUT'S CREATION. THESE ARE THE BREAKOUT MEN AND THE ROLES THEY PLAYED...



NOLAN BUSHNELL

■ Bushnell is credited for coming up with the original concept behind *Breakout*. Following a fitness boom in the Seventies, and the rise of the sport of racquetball, he sought to create an electronic version of the indoor sport.

STEVE BRISTOW

■ After impressing at Kee Games, Bristow was brought back into Atari and made its VP of engineering. Once there, he and Bushnell brainstormed gaming ideas, one of which included the racquetball *Pong* idea that became *Breakout*.

STEVE WOZNIAK

■ Wozniak is the man who created the prototype version of *Breakout*. Not an employee of Atari at the time, Wozniak was approached to engineer it by his friend Steve Jobs and was paid just $350 for his work.

STEVE JOBS

■ Jobs was employed as a technician for Atari at the time of *Breakout*'s inception and is the person who pulled all the strings to make it happen. He took Bushnell and Bristow's racquetball game concept to Wozniak and recruited him to bring it to fruition.

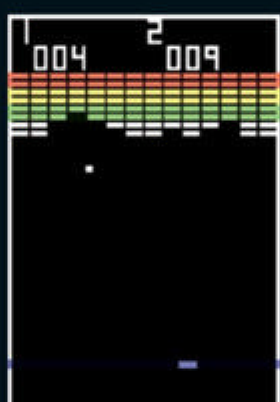
GARY WATERS

■ The man who engineered the final released version of *Breakout*, Waters was employed by Atari subsidiary Cyan Engineering. Waters was given Wozniak's board and told to recreate it in a way that could be easily mass-produced.

▶ understanding how it even worked", smiles Allan. "It wasn't released as a product until we got a normal engineer to redesign it so it could be understood, built and tested. It went from about 20 chips to around 100. But it was a great game."

Wozniak's version used RAM to store and track the blocks, which at the time was costly. Moreover, this first version was missing integral finishing-touch elements like coin control and sound. It also didn't have two-player capabilities. Therefore, as Allan says, Atari took the decision to redo the game from scratch, using Wozniak's version as a 'starting point'.

This job fell to Cyan Engineering, a firm based in Grass Valley, California, which Atari had struck up a strong partnership with during its fledgling years. The Cyan engineers were seen by Atari as the go-to guys for specialist engineering jobs, so it seemed the perfect company to redo Wozniak's *Breakout* and create a version fit for mass production. The final released version was engineered by Cyan's Gary Waters, and though it wasn't as economically constructed as Wozniak's (it was said to have used around 100 chips), from the outside at least it emulated it very closely – it was 'virtually identical' Wozniak would later admit.



» [Arcade] *Breakout* was another example of a classic arcade game that originated from a very simple idea. Little wonder it's been constantly copied over the years.

Released in April 1976, *Breakout* became another Atari success story. It was one of the earliest coin-op conversions for the 2600, and because of its popularity and simple design spawned countless clones, cementing its classic status.

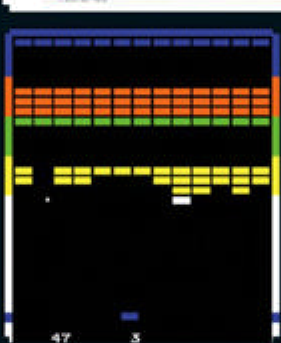
As to why *Breakout* became so popular? It's conceivable that the reason might lie with its destructive gameplay, which was pretty novel for its day. Its gameplay also famously inspired the games industry-rescuing shoot-'em-up *Space Invaders*, though Taito would later pay a more exact homage with *Arkanoid*.

Breakout was also a game that was very easy to understand and simple to pick up. It had simple controls (left and right movement) and if the ball was missed there was no question you were to blame. Its playfield comprised eight rows of tiles at the top of the screen, with every two rows displayed in a different colour that was added by strips of coloured cellophane. Colour wasn't there to simply make the game look pretty, though – it also denoted the amount of points players could earn. But *Breakout* had more going on under its simple exterior; the speed of the ball would increase over the course of the game and upon reaching the final red layer of tiles, the bat would shrink in size.

The first *Breakout* sequel, *Super Breakout*, was released in 1978. It was developed by *Asteroids* programmer Ed Logg and was one of the legendary programmer's earliest projects for Atari.

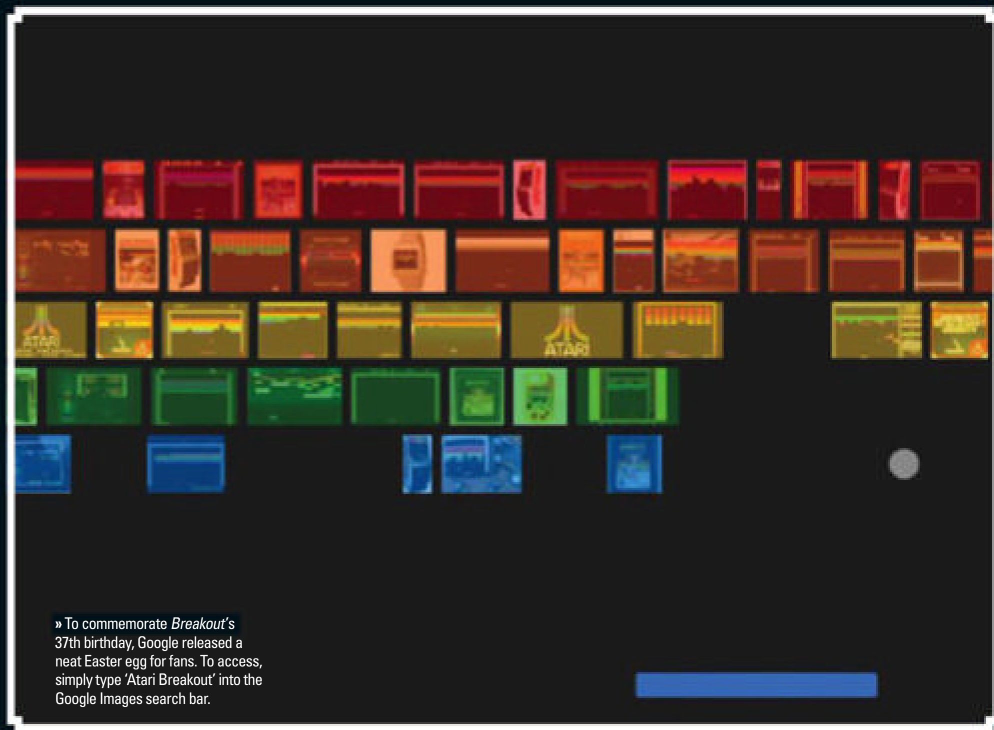
"I started work at Atari in February 1978," recalls Ed. "I was assigned to work on *Dirt Bike*, *Avalanche* and a large submarine game. All had been started or completed by Dennis Koble. *Avalanche* was about to go into production but *Dirt Bike* took most of my time. *Super Breakout* was started without the usual management approval process and was done only during downtime from *Dirty Bike*. I probably started it sometime in April 1978. When I was waiting for a new paper tape for *Dirt Bike* (yes, that is what we used to load into the development system), I would swap graphic EPROMs and load the *Super Breakout* tape and debug it. I believe this was the first time anyone





» Initially *Super Breakout* appeared to be an exact copy of the original game, but Ed Logg added plenty of clever little gameplay touches to spice things up.

» [Arcade] *Super Breakout's* 'Progressive' Mode had the wall inching ever closer towards you. It starts to make return balls very difficult.



» To commemorate *Breakout*'s 37th birthday, Google released a neat Easter egg for fans. To access, simply type 'Atari Breakout' into the Google Images search bar.

at Atari was working on two games literally at the same time."

Given how successful *Breakout* was, it's surprising to learn that Atari appeared quite nonchalant about a follow-up, taking its time to create one and then seemingly relegating it to a side-project to be worked on while focus and efforts were spent on new projects. Despite this, *Super Breakout* was a more than worthy sequel, capturing the essence of what made the original instantly engaging while adding some welcome variety to its brick-smashing gameplay.

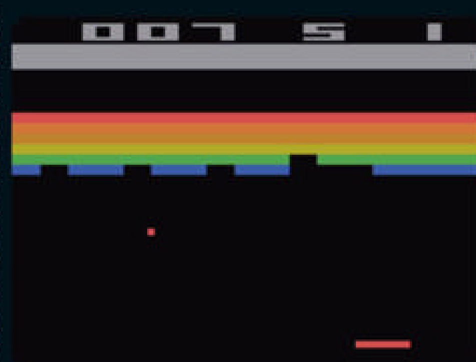
Unlike *Breakout*, which was created entirely in hardware, *Super Breakout* was programmed for the 6502 microprocessor. This meant it had to be written entirely from scratch, as none of the original game logic could be repurposed. From a less technical viewpoint, the thing that made *Super Breakout* different from its predecessor was that it offered players three different game modes. The first, 'Double Breakout', tasks players with trying to break down two lots of four rows of tiles, one row sat slightly beneath the other, with two balls that you bat back using two paddles stacked on top of each other. The second, 'Captivity', sees players trying to free two extra balls stuck in cavities. If a second ball is released, the score earned from hitting tiles is doubled, and if three are in play the score is tripled. The final mode is 'Progressive', which plays in a similar vein to *Space Invaders* (released in Japan the same year as *Super Breakout*) with two sets of brick walls edging closer to the paddle, moving faster as the game progresses.

According to Ed Logg, originally six modes were planned but only three made it into the finished game. "Besides the three modes released, there were three others with vertical columns. My idea was to release two versions of the game with three different versions in each. Unfortunately, three modes were more popular than the others so only they survived in the released game. It was interesting to see some of the same game ideas used in *Arkanoid*."

"THE IDEAS FOR SUPER BREAKOUT CAME FROM A DISCUSSION ANOTHER EMPLOYEE (OWEN RUBIN I BELIEVE) SAID THEY HAD WITH NOLAN BUSHNELL. THIS INCLUDED MULTIPLE BALLS, MULTIPLE PADDLES, VERTICAL COLUMNS ETC" Ed Logg

So where did these different game modes originate? "The ideas for *Super Breakout* came from a discussion another employee (Owen Rubin I believe) said they had with Nolan Bushnell," Ed reveals. "This included multiple balls, multiple paddles, vertical columns etc. There may have been multiple paddles on Atari 2600 (VCS) games at the time, so it is possible it came from some VCS game."

Given the prison break theme that *Breakout*'s gameplay would ultimately be tied to (dropping the original racquetball concept that kicked off the whole concept originally, though this returned for the 2600 port's packaging), it's amusing to learn of an incident involving Ed that saw him almost ▶



» [Atari 2600] *Breakout* was so popular that Atari soon ported it to its home console. It's an okay version, making good use of the console's paddles.

getting accused of stealing his own game.

"When we were finished field-testing our games, Atari allowed us to buy the prototype and take them home," remembers Ed. "I did this for *Super Breakout.* However, the Consumer Division of Atari wanted to create a VCS game so I lent them my cabinet to play upstairs in the same building. Well, many months later I wanted to take it home so I went upstairs and took it home, probably on a Friday… I came back the next week and I heard that they believed someone had stolen their game. I told them it was my game and I took it home, but they insisted the game was theirs. I am not sure how this got resolved but it did."

> "[WOZNIAK'S BREAKOUT] WASN'T RELEASED AS A PRODUCT UNTIL WE GOT A NORMAL ENGINEER TO REDESIGN IT SO IT COULD BE UNDERSTOOD, BUILT AND TESTED. IT WENT FROM ABOUT 20 CHIPS TO AROUND 100. BUT IT WAS A GREAT GAME" **Allan Alcorn**

There was no activity in the franchise for a long time after *Super Breakout*. Though many *Breakout* clones would carry the torch, it would take many years for another sequel to appear.

Breakout 2000 was one of a small number of Atari arcade classics reimagined for the Atari's ill-fated Jaguar console (others included *Missile Command* and *Tempest*). Developed by L4 Software and Telegames, it borrows a few ideas from Taito's *Arkanoid* but adds a few of its own.

Offering two game modes, Classic and Breakout 2000, the first is pretty much just a straight remake of the arcade original, while the latter is a colourful update that adopts a slanted viewpoint that makes it look a little like *Klax*. In *Breakout 2000*'s levels the action is expanded by handy pick-ups that can be collected and alter aspects like ball speed, paddle size, and give access to a useful auto-firing gun to blast away tiles with. It's also the first *Breakout* to feature a dual mode: a head-to-head *Breakout* game that allows players to knock their ball into their opponent's playing field. Now a rare and collectable game for the console, the only thing that lets *Breakout 2000* down is the controls, which just aren't as responsive as having a rotary control scheme.

The year 2000 then saw the release of *Breakout* by Hasbro, a reimagining of the series that seemed to try to refresh the series by giving it 3D platformer-style makeover. In the mid-Nineties Hasbro had purchased the intellectual property rights of Atari Inc, as well as *Frogger* from Konami, and with them began releasing 3D updates of the firm's beloved coin-op classics including *PONG*, *Centipede*, *Missile Command* and *Breakout*. Developed by Supersonic Software and released for PlayStation, PC and Mac, *Breakout* is a colourful 3D cartoon adventure game tied to *Breakout*'s tile-breaking formula and is notable for tying a story to the gameplay.



» [PlayStation] *Breakout* was rather ace on Sony's console, with a good story mode.

As a sentient paddle named Bouncer, players have to break him and his friends from prison after they're put there by an evil paddle. Okay, so deep its story wasn't, but the game does hold a certain charm as a result. The game adopted *Breakout 2000*'s 3D into-the-screen viewpoint, and its levels are themed – set in places including a gloomy prison, a castle and even a farm with possessed chickens. Hasbro's *Breakout* also has mini-game stages (one sees Bouncer running towards the screen to escape a hungry wolf), boss battles and different shot types: you can slice the ball and even use the shoulder buttons to angle your shots.

Currently, the last game in the *Breakout* series is the iOS game *Breakout Boost*. As you would expect, it makes use of the touch-screen controls of Apple's devices, offering comfortable single-finger controls more in line with the responsive rotary controls of old. Overall, *Boost* delivers a nice portable version of *Breakout* and has some interesting features. Destroying certain tiles can cause bonus point capsules to cascade down the screen and there's a selection of useful power-ups too. It also adds a neat in-game bar that allows you set the speed of the ball on the fly – the faster the ball travels, the more points you earn from smashing tiles. The only things that mar the experience are in-app purchases (you only get 15 levels for free and additional map packs, which contain anywhere between 50 to 80 levels, cost 69p each) and an annoying advert that flashes up after each non-purchased level is cleared.

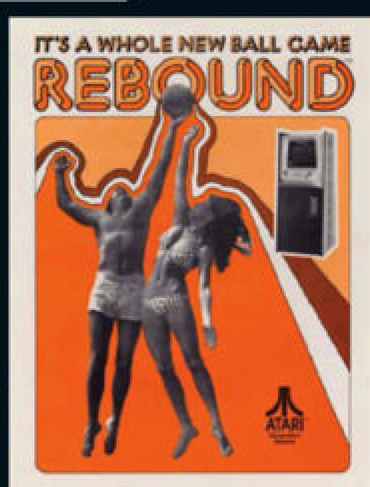
PONG LEGACY

Following Pong's success, several variants of the game have appeared. Here are some notable examples



BREAKOUT

■ Inspired by a racquetball boom, *Breakout* became a big hit in its own right and was a big inspiration for Tomohiro Nishikado when designing *Space Invaders*.

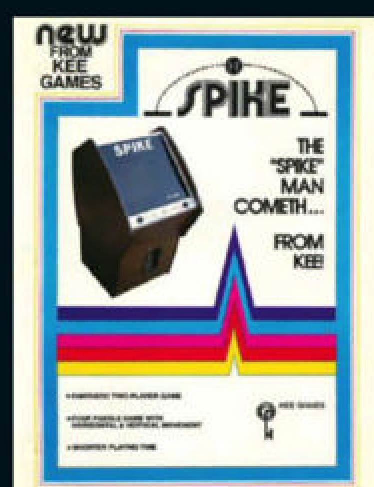


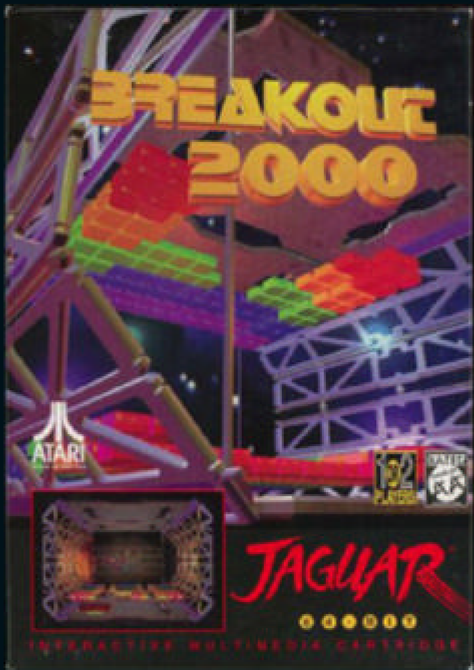
REBOUND

■ *Rebound* saw the paddles turned 90 degrees and players volleying a ball over a net at the centre of the field. It was also released as a *Pong* upgrade.

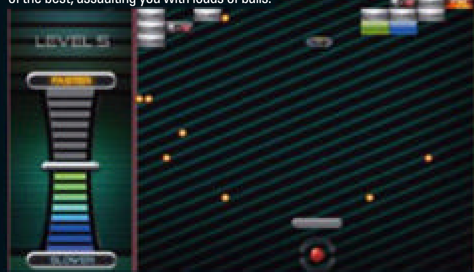
SPIKE

■ A *Rebound* clone manufactured by Atari's surreptitious subsidiary Kee Games. Kee's version is notable for adding a button that allowed players to perform a spike shot.

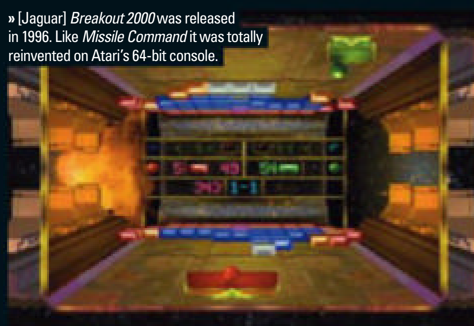




» [Jaguar] *Breakout 2000* was a decent update for the series, adding interesting power-ups and a new viewpoint.



» [iOS] *Breakout Boost* featured plenty of *Arkanoid*-styled power-ups. This is easily one of the best, assaulting you with loads of balls.

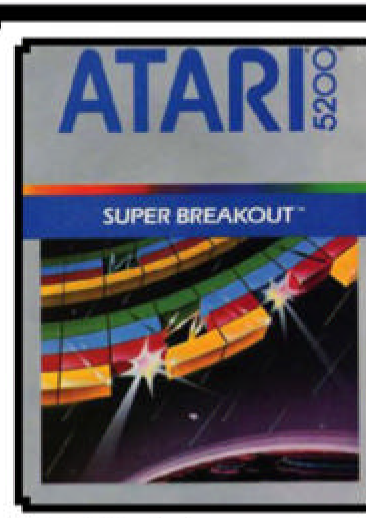


» [Jaguar] *Breakout 2000* was released in 1996. Like *Missile Command* it was totally reinvented on Atari's 64-bit console.

So that's the story of *Breakout*, but what became of Jobs and Wozniak? Well, just prior to *Breakout*'s release in 1976 the two men, along with Ronald Wayne, who Jobs had worked with at Atari, established Apple Computer from inside a garage. After launching their enterprise with the Apple I circuit-board kit computer, what followed was Apple's astronomical rise in the home computer market during the Eighties with the Apple II, the first hugely successful mass-produced home computer.

Proving that the truth will always out, several years later Wozniak would learn of Jobs' dishonesty about the *Breakout* fee. Wozniak responded by saying that if Jobs had come to him and said he needed the money, then he would have gladly given it to him.

Imitation has been a part of gaming's growth from the very beginning, and perhaps no game is proof of this more than *Breakout*. It is, after all, a variant of *PONG*, and the clones it inspired far outnumber the sequels it spawned. That it's one of the most uncomplicated concepts in gaming also proves that even the simplest of ideas can become a smash hit (or maybe that should be a hit smash?).



OTHER NOTABLE BREAKOUTS

■ Following *Breakout*'s success, Atari had originally planned to release a handheld version of *Super Breakout* (alongside portable versions of *Touch Me* and a game called *Pin It*) to allow people to the play the game on the go. Now a rare piece of Atari history, only two prototypes are believed to exist after the idea was scrapped. Two versions of *Breakout* also came preloaded on Atari's *Video Pinball* dedicated console in 1978, and sequel *Super Breakout* was a pack-in game for the Atari 5200, though it was poorly received owing to the machine's notorious analogue controller making it a pig to play. Amazingly, the first exact home port of the *Breakout* coin-op (the 2600 port was an approximation of the original) was designed by **Retro Gamer** freelancer Martin Goldberg. It was created for a kids' meal promotion for Taco Bell.



PUPPY PONG / DR. PONG

■ This free-to-play version of *Pong* was designed to sit in paediatricians' waiting rooms. In essence, a clever strategy to get more kids experiencing and loving *Pong*.



OFF THE WALL

■ Manufactured by Bally-Sente, *Off The Wall* was based on a game concept by Bushnell and was a tennis take on *Rebound*. It allowed you to adjust the racquet-holding arm of its tennis player avatars.

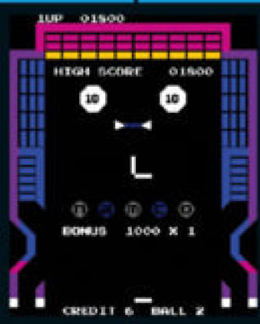
OFF THE WALL

■ No relation to Bally-Sente's game, this *Klax*-style version of *Breakout* saw players breaking tile formations to get the ball to the exit and supported up to three players.



BREAKOUT THE CLONES

THOUGH BREAKOUT HAS ONLY RECEIVED FOUR SEQUELS, IT DID SPAWN A DIZZYING NUMBER OF CLONES. HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST



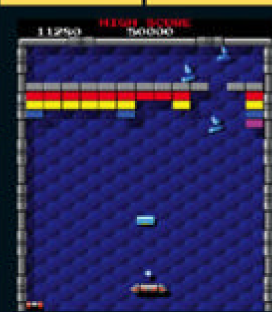
GEE BEE (1978)

■ Notable for being the first game to be developed internally at Namco, *Gee Bee* was designed by *Pac-Man* creator Toru Iwatani and blended elements of *Breakout* with pinball. The latter influence apparently came from Iwatani's desire to design pinball tables.



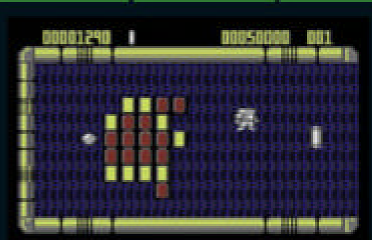
CIRCUS (1977)

■ This early Exidy release is perhaps the first bat-and-ball game to feature humanoid character sprites. The tiles are replaced with scrolling balloons – the paddle, two clowns on a see-saw – but the objective remains the same. A similar-looking game named *Atari Circus* later appeared on the 2600.



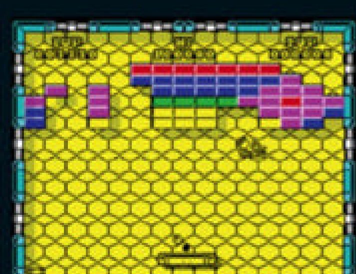
ARKANOID (1986)

■ Taito loved *Breakout* so much it released its own version, which became a popular franchise and introduced many staples to the genre – from power-ups and different tile types and formations, to enemy targets. Sequels later introduced boss battles and warp gates.



KRAKOUT (1987)

■ *Krakout* is basically a horizontal *Breakout* with kamikaze enemies that must be avoided as they can destroy your paddle. The change in perspective takes some getting used to and doesn't work as well as the classic viewpoint, but it's still an interesting little twist on *Breakout*.



BATTY (1987)

■ A giveaway in *Your Sinclair*, before seeing a budget release as a result of its popularity, *Batty* was a slick bat-and-ball game from Elite. *Batty* looks and plays most like *Arkanoid*, featuring a similar arcade look, a bevy of useful power-ups and shmup-style enemies.



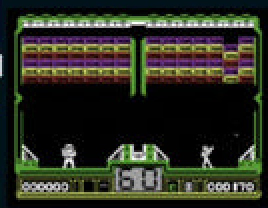
QUESTER (1987)

■ Namco's *Arkanoid*, *Quester* didn't do anything too ambitious with the bat-and-ball genre, and it is perhaps because of this that it was never released outside Japan and has faded into obscurity – that and it's bloody hard.



TRAZ (1988)

■ This interesting *Breakout* clone is loaded with variety and features. As well as elements such as multiple paddles, power-ups and enemies determined by whichever level of the 64 you are playing, it also features a level editor so you can construct your own stages.



HOTSHOT (1988)

■ A competitive twist on *Breakout*, *HotShot* was heavily hyped in its day. It pits two players, or one against the computer, in a battle to smash away the most number of tiles. Though a neat idea, it was let down by fiddly controls and poor visuals.



WOODY POP (1987)

■ Released for the Master System in Japan (and later Game Gear globally) and playable only with its paddle controller, Woody Pop was Sega's answer to *Arkanoid*. Controlling a wooden paddle, players have to destroy toy-shaped tile formations while collecting helpful power-ups and hitting enemies released into the playing field.



ALLEYWAY (1989)

■ There was a point where it seemed every machine needed to have its own version of *Breakout*, and *Alleyway* on Game Boy is Nintendo's offering. It's a simple clone that feels more *Breakout* than *Arkanoid*. Its most interesting feature is that it has stages with moving tile formations.



KIRBY'S BLOCK BALL (1995)

■ Working your way through themed stages grouped into islands, the ball is played by Kirby, who can acquire various powers to make clearing tiles easier. By hitting the A button at the right moment, it's possible to increase the power of your shots.



VORTEX (2006)

■ Given *Breakout*'s connection with Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, it's ironic that Apple would later release its own version of the game. Released for iPods, *Vortex* has an almost *Tempest* look and feel, which comes from its levels taking the form of a 3D cylinder. It's also controlled using the device's click wheel.

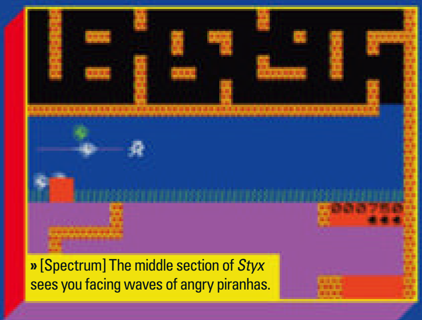


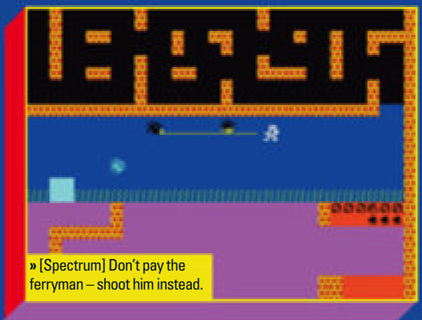
SHATTER (2009)

■ This superb downloadable title has plenty of tricks under its beautiful retro exterior. The key to *Shatter* is your paddle which can blow and suck nearby objects, including your ball. It's a brilliant concept that adds a layer of strategy to an otherwise excellent *Arkanoid* clone. It also has a superb soundtrack.

STYX

Before Miner Willy ventured into Central Cavern, there came a simple shooter called Styx. On the 30th anniversary of its release, Paul Drury crosses the Mersey to ask Matthew Smith about his Spectrum debut

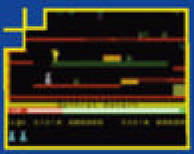

» [Spectrum] The middle section of *Styx* sees you facing waves of angry piranhas.


» [Spectrum] Don't pay the ferryman – shoot him instead.


» [Spectrum] The imposing figure of Charon is quite impressive for an early Spectrum game.

It's a bit sparse, innit?" sniffs Matthew Smith, staring intently at the little screen of our mobile phone. He's not making disparaging comments about our handset, though. We're showing him a play-through video of *Styx*, his first Spectrum title. As we watch the game's chubby spaceman blast a few nasties and waddle through a mini-maze, we have to agree that the gameplay is rather minimal. But then it was never meant to be a game in the first place…

We're sat in one of Matthew's old Eighties haunts – a seafront arcade in New Brighton, near Liverpool, where he's about to be filmed for the *Bedroom to Billions* project, a documentary chronicling the birth of the British videogames industry. We know all the talk will be of *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*, the games that secured him a place in the hearts of Spectrum gamers forever, so we've decided to remind him of where it all began.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DELTA TAU-ONE
SYSTEM: TRS-80
YEAR: 1982

MANIC MINER
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1983

JET SET WILLY
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1984

"I hadn't even got my own Spectrum when I wrote this," Matthew says. His eyes are wide and unblinking, as though *Styx*'s garish colour scheme is having a hypnotic effect on its creator. "It was technically on loan from Bug-Byte. They lent me it on the strength of some Tandy games I'd done, a *Defender* clone and a *Galaxian*."

While the former never left his trusty TRS-80, the latter did become his debut title, *Delta Tau-One*. Whether selling 15 hand-copied cassettes through the Molimerx software catalogue qualifies as a 'commercial release' is debatable, but Bug-Byte clearly saw enough to lend him a Spectrum and send him off to work on Sinclair's new machine. The talented Mr Smith returned three weeks later with *Styx*.

"All the good stuff is at the top," he says, poking his finger at the upper third of the screen. To save on memory and try to give some variety to a single-screen game, Matthew divided the playfield into three distinct areas, with enemies only appearing as our laser-wielding hero entered their domain. The first section is indeed the most developed, reminding us of the maze-based blasting of *Wizard Of Wor*.

"Yeah, that was it!" blurts out Matt. "I used to play that in here. I couldn't remember the name till you just mentioned it."

And the firing is a bit like *Defender*, we suggest.

"Yeah, *Defender*. And *Frogger*," he adds. *Frogger*? We can't quite see that, Matt?

"Ah, yeah, if this hadn't been on the 16K Spectrum, that middle bit would've been a river with alligators and a *Frogger* thing but I'd run out of memory. So it's just piranhas."

Our plucky spaceman destroys his fishy foes and moves into the final portion of the game, an encounter with Charon himself, the mythical ferryman who transported the souls of the dead across the river Styx

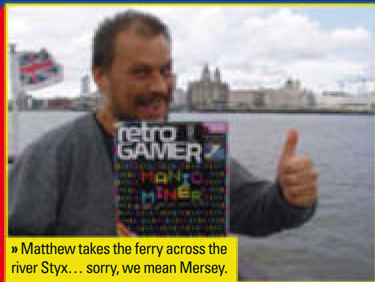
to the afterlife. Sending forth a flotilla of deadly spiders from his outstretched, accusing finger, he makes a sinister end-of-level boss.

"He's leaning forward to get his wrist out of the way of the colour clash," quips Matthew, bringing us back to earth.

With Charon defeated, it's back to the top of the screen to do it all again, a little quicker and a little harder each time. The enemies are nicely drawn and the action is fast and flicker free, but you will have seen everything the game has to offer in a minute or two. And that was precisely the idea, Matt explains. *Styx* was simply a technical demo to prove he could apply his Tandy coding skills to the Spectrum but when he showed it to Bug Byte, their response was pleasantly surprising.

"They just said, yeah, we'll publish that straight away and bought it off me for £3,000," grins Matt. "Now what are you going to do next? That's when we started talking about *Manic Miner*. And they let me keep the Spectrum!"

To celebrate, Matthew painted the machine metallic green and used some of the cash, a considerable sum for a 16-year-old lad, to go on holiday to Italy, where he scribbled the ideas for a multi-levelled platform game in a little red notebook. He

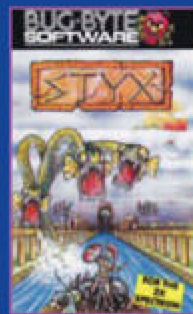


» Matthew takes the ferry across the river Styx… sorry, we mean Mersey.

began coding immediately on his return and before 1983 was out, *Manic Miner* had leapt onto Spectrums across the land. We wonder if Miner Willy owes anything to what he'd learned writing *Styx*?

"I learned that maze games were particularly well suited to avoiding colour clash and brickwork looks quite nice on the Spectrum. And spiders work well with square pixels!"

Right on cue, Matthew is called onto the makeshift set and is filmed for the next two hours talking about the heady *Jet Set* days and the prolonged and painful hangover that followed. We take him for a Guinness afterwards and return to *Styx*, wondering aloud whether someone playing this modest little shooter could have possibly



» [Spectrum] As was common in the early Eighties, the cover art for *Styx* bore little resemblance to the gameplay.

guessed its creator would go on to produce two of the Spectrum's best-loved titles.

"Bug Byte must have seen something," muses Matt. "I was pleased with *Styx*, but there was constant competition in Liverpool at the time. When this came out, *Arcadia* by Dave Lawson was out too. It wasn't until *Manic Miner* was well on the way that I thought maybe I was better than the average videogame writer."

We push the point further and make a rather pretentious analogy with The Beatles playing primitive rock and roll in sweaty Hamburg nightclubs in 1960 and then writing the sublime *Yesterday* soon afterwards. "There will have been people who'd heard *Yesterday* and said, 'They were great two years ago, playing in Hamburg'," replies Matt, curtly.

We can't resist one last bit of pomposity. Given that the Styx is the river between Earth and the underworld, we ask Matthew if he's ever felt close to that divide?

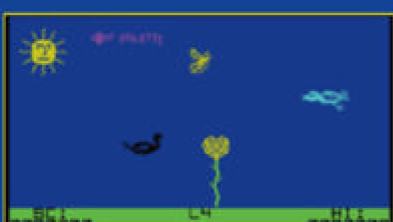
"The future is uncertain and the end is always near," he giggles, quoting Jim Morrison as he drains his pint. "Nah, I'm quite capable of ignoring my own mortality."

Many thanks to Martyn Carroll.
Photography © P. Drury and M. Smith.

"Bug-Byte bought Styx off me for £3,000 and said, 'Now, what are you going to do next?'" EIGHT WEEKS LATER, MATTHEW DELIVERED *MANIC MINER* TO THEIR DOOR

BUSY BEE

As well as *Styx* and *Manic Miner*, Matthew did one other piece of Spectrum work in 1983, helping with graphics tools for *The Birds And The Bees*, programmed by fellow Bug-Byte coder Adrian Sherwin. "I think he needed help and I was pretty keen to do it," Matt says. "It was an okay piece of work. I was just helping out a mate." Given his talent for creating beautifully detailed visuals with the Spectrum's limited palette, we wonder if he ever considered specialising as a graphic artist? "Nah, the coders got more respect back then, and yet the art takes all the time. Once you've designed the levels and the gameplay and drawn the graphics, the coding is just a chore that needs to be done." Sadly, that chore would take its toll the following year with *Jet Set Willy*, Matt's glorious but premature swansong.



» [Spectrum] Matthew helped with the graphics for *The Birds And The Bees*, a shooter coded by Bug-Byte's Adrian Sherwin.

CAPCOM: 30 YEARS, 30 GAMES

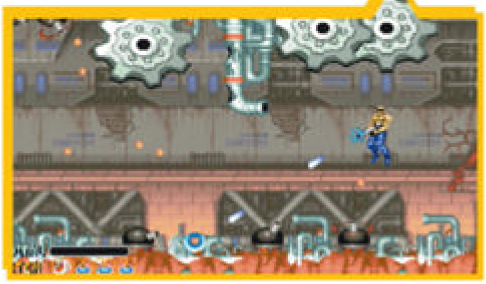
As Capcom celebrates 30 years of hit making, we asked readers to vote on their all-time favourite games from the legendary studio. Which Capcom classics made it onto the list? Let's find out…



Forgotten Worlds

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1988
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

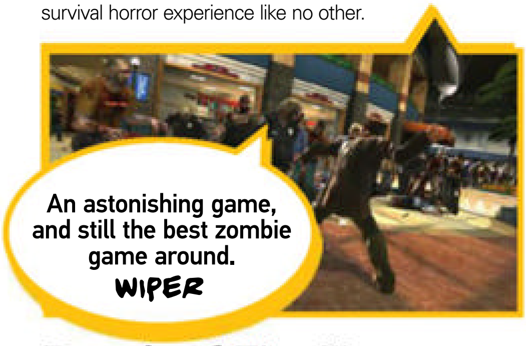
30 **The final game** in Capcom's early jetpack trilogy (also comprising *Section Z* and *Side Arms – Hyper Dyne*), *Forgotten Worlds* is a multidirectional shooter with awesome bosses, stunning backdrops and a neat earn-as-you-play mechanic – downed enemies drop currency called Zenny which can be used to purchase new weapons in pop-up shops. It also has some of the best worst audio dialogue between two men in a videogame, exemplified by… Flying Abs Man 1: 'I've done it! I'm still shivering'. Flying Abs Steroid Man 2 'Yeah, me too, man!'.



Dead Rising

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2006
■ **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

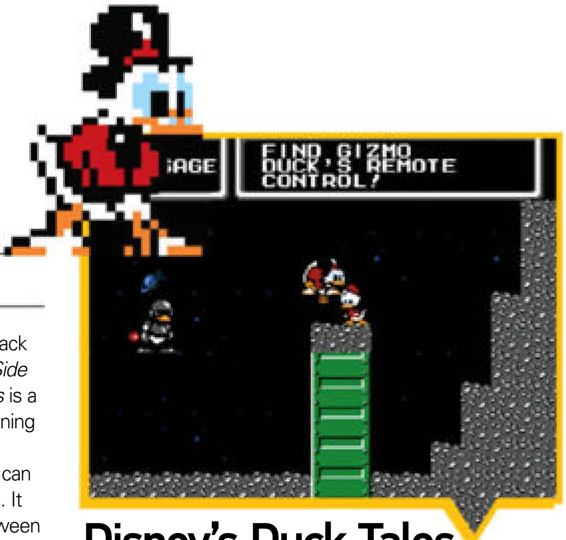
29 **Capcom's unofficial *Dawn*** *Of The Dead* videogame caught gamers' attention with its *Resident Evil* comparisons and preview shots showing more slavering zombies dressed in more different attire than in any videogame to date. *Dead Rising* is a Marmite experience, but credit to Capcom for doing something a bit different with the survival horror genre. Whether it's raiding shops for new clothes, discovering hilarious ways to kill the walking dead, or just fantasising about feeding that irritating janitor guy to a lawnmower, *Dead Rising* offers a unique open-world survival horror experience like no other.



Breath Of Fire III

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1997
■ **GENRE:** RPG

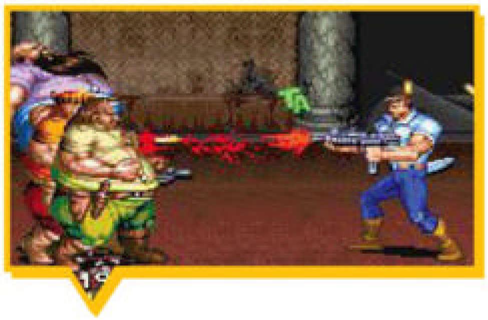
28 **Capcom's cult RPG** series certainly benefited when it migrated from the SNES to PlayStation. As well as being the first 3D game in the series (although it retained the 2D sprite design), it introduced brand new gameplay mechanics, with the ability to learn new skills from NPCs (called Masters) being one of the most prominent. It was rereleased for Sony's PSP in 2005, giving you the perfect excuse to revisit Capcom's classy RPG.



Disney's Duck Tales

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1989
■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

27 **Capcom's first ever** licensed videogame, *Disney's Duck Tales* is also one of its most fondly remembered platformers. Capturing the look and feel of the television show, it sees players jet-setting around the globe as Scrooge McDuck as he embarks on a mission to basically make himself even richer. Sure, the mission might be pointless, but it is tremendous fun thanks to the game's slick mix of exploration and platforming action, and cameos from popular characters from the show.



Cadillacs & Dinosaurs

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

26 **If you're longing** for a prehistoric *Final Fight* (and who doesn't?) then *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* is the perfect game for you. The first of two side-scrolling fighters on this list to be based on a comic book, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* actually improves on the Capcom classic *Final Fight* in some areas. It adds neat vehicle sections, a more interesting variety of punch fodder with dinosaurs, and guns. Yes, it's pretty violent, with blood sprays and scenes of extreme dinosaur torture that some palaeontologists may find offensive. Full of character and classic beat-'em-up action, though, it's another Cappy classic.



Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2005
■ **GENRE:** HACK & SLASH

25 **After the strong** criticism *Devil May Cry 2* received from fans, Capcom knew it needed to get the franchise back in line with the feel of the first game. *Devil May Cry 3* is a prequel, and a fine-tuning of the winning *DMC* formula. It offers deeper Gothic hack-and-slash action enhanced brilliantly with a new combat system that gives fans a choice of unique combat styles for Dante.



1942

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1984
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

24 **One of Capcom's** earliest hits, *1942* was a WWII shooter with no ridiculous weaponry or crazy enemy design, just great graphics and solid gameplay. This was enhanced by a cool loop manoeuvre to evade enemy bullets, and a setting at odds with the future- and space-based blasters that dominated arcades at the time. *1942* put Capcom on the map and has spawned, to date, five sequels, with the sublime *1944 – The Loop Master* just missing out on a spot in this readers' top 30.





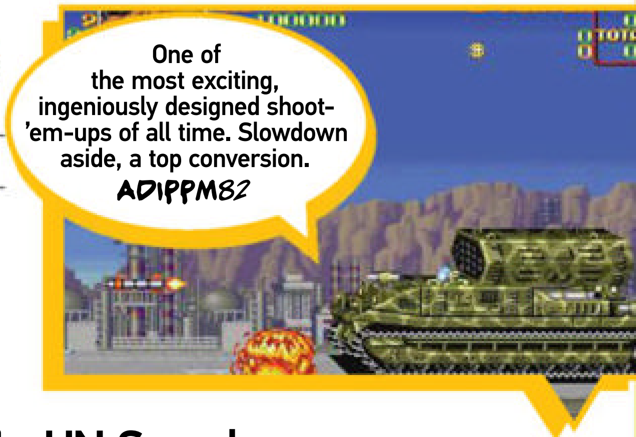




Alien Vs Predator

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1994
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

20 **If the *AVP*** movies contained anything close to the run-and-gun insanity of this game, they'd probably be as highly rated as the original classic films they combined. Based on the Dark Horse comic books, it teams up two soldiers (one of whom is *Predator*'s Dutch Schaefer) with two affable Predators and pits them against a swarm of various aliens. Boasting the same exhilarating side-scrolling action that made *Final Fight* a hit but with awesome alien weaponry, it's a cracking unconverted fighter.



Commando

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1985
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

23 ***Commando* was the** game that first introduced players to Capcom hero Super Joe – here seen making his videogame debut as a little blue soldier dropped in front of enemy lines who must run a brave (read: stupid) gauntlet to rescue some POWs. A vertically scrolling run-and-gun game with solid gameplay, *Commando* is the older brother of *Bionic Commando*. It also received a raft of ports for home systems courtesy of Elite Systems. We urge fans to seek out the bizarre German version of the coin-op, though, which was renamed *Space Invasion* and features *Contra*-style soldier enemies to blast into burger.



UN Squadron

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1989
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

18 **Based on the** classic manga *Area 88* (which is the game's Japanese title), *UN Squadron* is a stunning side-scrolling military-themed shooter. The plane and vehicle designs are the standout here, to the extent that you almost feel a pang of regret when you blast them to bits. Add in some lovely backdrops, a weapon system that lets you buy and equip tasty weaponry to your iron eagle and a superb SNES conversion, and you have all the marks of a classic Capcom shooter.

Power Stone 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

22 **Refining the chaotic** four-way combat that made the original such a hit, *Power Stone 2* didn't mess with the formula but built on it with new characters and weapons, four-player battles, and all-new wacky environments that shift and transform as the battles rage. Over all this, there is also a fantastic new Adventure Mode that awards players with new weapons to take into battle or mix them together to create new ones.



Marvel Vs Capcom 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2000
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

17 **Capcom left no** stone unturned in appeasing beat-'em-up and comic-book crowds with *MVC2*, which offered epic three-on-three battles, a control system designed to make its combat more accessible and the largest character roster ever seen in a fighting game – 56, including pretty much every notable Marvel and Capcom face, from Silver Samurai to Strider Hiryu. The fighting is wonderfully manic and although there are balancing issues, its epic and accessible nature makes them forgivable. While it's not quite the best fighter out there, it's certainly one of the most entertaining.



Bionic Commando

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1987
■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

21 **Early Capcom liked** to experiment with platformers, often doing its most innovative work inside the genre, and *Bionic Commando* is a prime example. It's a platformer in which jumping is outlawed – instead, its hero Super Joe must use his telescopic bionic arm to swing from platforms to get around like a bionic Tarzan. Though a popular coin-op, the franchise garnered most of its fan base from Capcom's excellent NES reimagining, which developed the story and refined the swing mechanic to create a far richer and more playable game.

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2005
■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE GAME

19 **A clever take** on the graphic adventure genre, *Ace Attorney* is an unusual Capcom game. Playing the role of defence lawyer Phoenix Wright, you must prove the innocence of your clients by gathering evidence, cross-examining witnesses and shouting 'Objection!' a lot. The series was born on the GBA and originally exclusive to Japan. But when the first three games later saw a Western release on DS, the series won a strong fan base in the West.



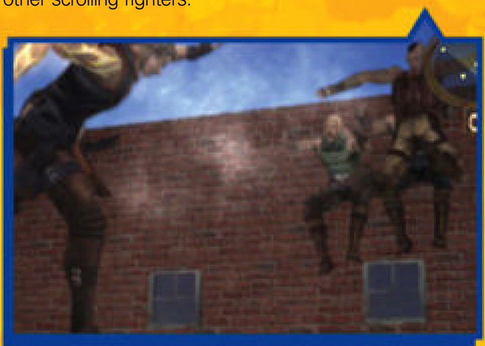




God Hand

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2006
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

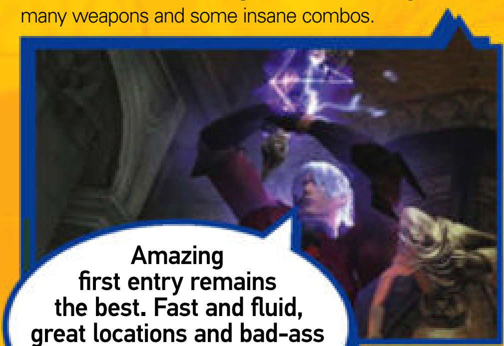
16 **From the now** defunct Clover Studio, comprised of prominent Capcom talent, *God Hand* didn't so much tear up the scrolling fighter rule book, it rewrote is as some sort of beat-'em-up grimoire. With a story that feels like a cross between *The Fist Of The North Star* and *The Wicker Man*, *God Hand* is a wonderfully insane brawler. It offers an impressive amount of moves, combos and customisation options and it is this that sets it apart from a great many other scrolling fighters.



Devil May Cry

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2001
■ **GENRE:** HACK & SLASH

15 **When Shinji Mikami** asked *Resident Evil 2* director Hideki Kamiya to create a concept for *RE4*, the Gothic European setting and new superhuman hero that he and series writer Noboru Sigimura came up with were deemed unsuitable, but interesting ingredients for a new game. In many ways *DMC* is the antithesis of *Resident Evil*, the latter's plodding, underpowered heroes replaced by the graceful and powerful Dante, and its 3D environments feel far less enclosed. With this power and space to wield it, you became the hunter, battling enemies with the game's many weapons and some insane combos.







Ghosts 'n Goblins

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1985
■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

14 **Capcom's spooky platformer** was odd for its time. The first stage was unwelcoming, it had a callous difficulty level, a hero whose movement felt restrictive, and a Gothic aesthetic at odds with the cute and colourful norm. As Sir Arthur, you have to rescue his beloved Prin Prin from the clutches of Satan. No easy task thanks to some of the most erratic enemy behaviour in a videogame and the harshest of final twists: upon defeating Satan, Arthur learns that the first run was a trap and he has to complete the entire game again but on a higher difficulty. We're a little surprised it didn't incite riots, to be honest.

Okami

■ **DEVELOPER:** CLOVER STUDIO ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2006
■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

13 **Although *Okami* shares** many similarities with Nintendo's acclaimed *Zelda* franchise, Clover introduced plenty of neat little mechanics to make it stand proudly apart from the legendary series. The most obvious is the clever painting mechanic delivered through the Celestial Brush – which debuted on PS2, but was put to better use on the Wii thanks to its unique controller; this lets the player create objects that can help combat or allow progress through *Okami*'s gorgeously constructed world. There's also a neat levelling-up system, with the player's character – a beautiful spirit wolf called Amaterasu – helping villagers to earn praise, which improves its statistics. It's finished off with a beautiful cel-shaded aesthetic and some stunningly inventive boss encounters.

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1991
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

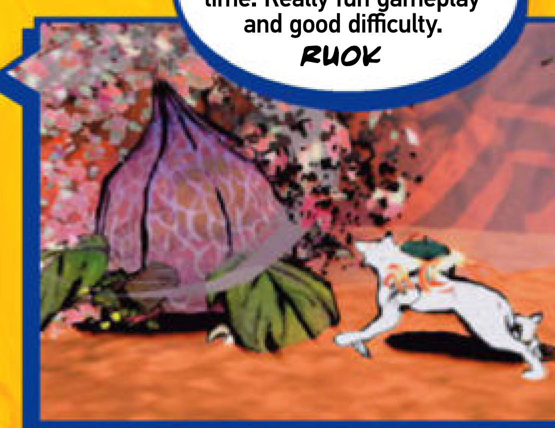
12 **It is the** most famous fighting game ever, of that there is no question. *Street Fighter II* refined and redefined the competitive fighting game, raising the bar and the standard for all to follow, and many unabashedly did. Everything in it is pulling in the same direction, from its art style, fluid controls and imaginative and memorable fighters to its catchy music tracks by main composer Yoko Shimomura. The end result is a crucial game that reignited interest in both competitive and arcade gaming and helped tip the scales of market dominance away from computers and towards game consoles.

Viewtiful Joe

■ **DEVELOPER:** CLOVER STUDIO ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2003
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

11 ***Viewtiful Joe* formed** part of the 'Capcom Five', a quintet of GameCube exclusives overseen by Shinji Mikami. You play Joe, a boy who's sucked into his own superhero movie. A stunning platformer cum beat-'em-up, *Viewtiful Joe* was praised for is its stunning 3D cel-shaded visuals and surprisingly deep combat system, which lets you string together an impressive flurry of punches and kicks with ease and perform film-related special attacks, tied to a grading system that rewards stylish fighting with new moves. The gorgeous painterly art style and 3D models against 2D backgrounds, it could also be said, may have even influenced the aesthetic of *Street Fighter IV*.





Street Fighter IV

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2008
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

10 **While there's no** denying the *SF* series delivered with continued 2D offerings like the *Alpha* series and *3rd Strike*, towards the end of the 32-bit era it that seemed that mainstream gaming was leaving the franchise behind. *Tekken*, *Virtua Fighter* and *Soul Calibur* had successfully moved fighting into 3D arenas and Ryu and co's 3D debut, *Street Fighter EX*, convinced many fans that they should stick to dimensions they were most comfortable with. Then *Street Fighter IV* burst on the scene in a kaleidoscope of colour, heady nostalgia and weird ink trails. A 3D fighter in appearance but very much a fighting game in the 2D tradition, Capcom found the sweet spot by merging the best aspects of *Street Fighter II* and *3rd Strike* and delivering a fresh new instalment that would appease both hardcore fans and attract a whole new generation of competitive gamers to the franchise's delights.



Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

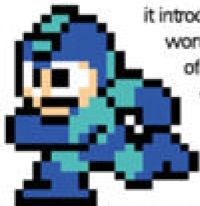
■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1999
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

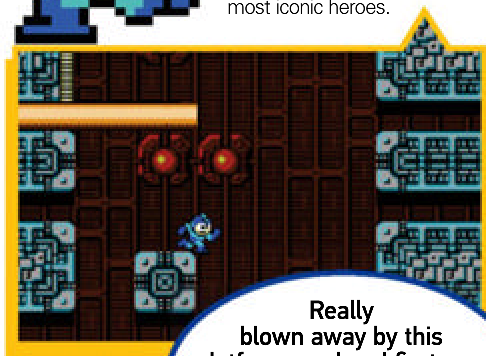
9 **Capcom's third iteration** of its third *Street Fighter* game was the best of the bunch, tightening the combat mechanics, bringing in fan favourite Chun-Li and introducing Makoto, Q, Remy and Twelve. Guard parries were introduced, numerous commands for air throws and holds were changed, while the combat engine was constantly refined until it shone. The end result was a stupendously good fighter that was released on numerous home consoles, from Sega Dreamcast to Xbox 360. It's still played widely in tournaments today, cementing its position as one of the best 2D fighters of all time.

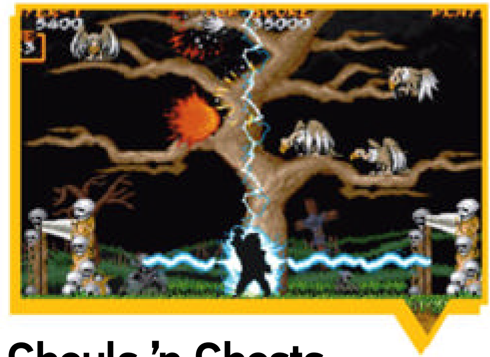
Mega Man 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1988
■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

8 **Mega Man has** quite a few games under his blue belt, but *Mega Man 2* is the game that elevated Capcom's Astro Boy-style hero to classic status. Though it does nothing that remarkable from a design perspective over the first game, this sequel takes the clever gameplay groundwork it introduced and polishes it up wonderfully. Now seen as something of a mascot for the studio (taking over from Captain Commando), Mega Man has gone on to become one of Capcom's most iconic heroes.







Ghouls 'n Ghosts

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1988
■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

7 **Bigger, better and** even more challenging than its predecessor, *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* is yet another example of a Capcom super sequel. The CP System arcade hardware the game ran on brought Arthur's Gothic world to life in stunning and vibrant detail. The game also introduced a bevy of new weapons and power-ups, including powerful gold armour that gives Arthur greater protection. The notorious difficulty level of *Ghost 'n Goblins* was also back in full force: booby-trapped pick-ups include an annoying wizard who transforms Arthur into an old man or a lame duck, and fancy-looking weapons that aren't even as effective as the standard lance. Oh, and Capcom once again decided to force players to play the game twice to beat it.

Really blown away by this platformer when I first saw those screenshots and video footage. Brilliant stuff.
THL

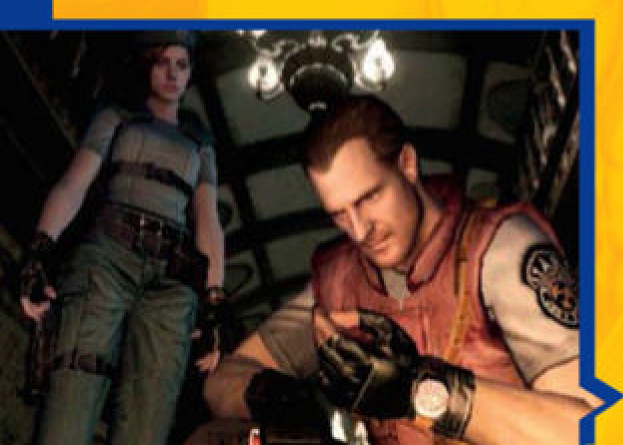
Strider



■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1989
■ **GENRE:** ACTION

6 **While Darran did** consider rigging the ballot, he's perfectly happy that *Strider* made your top ten. Creator Kouichi 'Isuke' Yotsui was allowed to run riot when he created his magnificent platformer and the end result is one of the most inventive arcade games of its time. Powered by Capcom's CPS-1 board, *Strider* delivered sensational-looking and imaginative level design, beautifully animated characters and some of the most outlandish bosses to ever see the inside of an arcade. *Strider* wasn't just a looker, however, delivering near perfect controls, plenty of neat gameplay mechanics and impossibly tight level design. And have we ever mentioned that it has the best second level of any game ever made? It sounds like something we'd say.





Resident Evil

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1996
■ **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

5 ***Resident Evil* stuck** in gamers' heads like great horror always does. An action-packed house of horrors story (and one that was surprisingly original for its time), *Resident Evil* told the tale of a police task force trapped in a mysterious mansion populated by zombies, rabid gods, giant spiders, a carnivorous plant, giant shark and more. The puzzles were a bit silly, the dialogue hammy, and the scare tactics pretty cheap (dogs smashing through glass, zombies hiding in wardrobes and so on), but none of that mattered as the game just had a sense of humour, charm and freshness that instantly struck a chord with gamers. As well as spawning a long line of sequels, so enduring is the original *Resident Evil* that it has been paid reverence to several times through rereleases, from the superb *Director's Cut* on PS1 – which added such things as an arrange mode that replaced items in different places, an enhanced Berretta and new outfits for Jill and Chris – to the astonishingly good *Resident Evil* remake for GameCube.

Street Fighter II Turbo

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

4 **Far from being** a simple cash-in on the fight fever the original had generated, *Turbo* was actually a genius refinement of *Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting*, an update of the original game that made several enhancements to the gameplay – sorting out balancing issues, allowing players to adjust the speed of the game, and introducing several new moves. Of course, the reason fans were most excited about *Turbo* was the fact it made the four boss characters playable (though this feature first appeared in the *Championship Edition* coin-op). Making a great game even greater, it became the connoisseur's choice when it came to *Street Fighter II* home ports. Though we're sure some Mega Drive owners would beg to differ.





Resident Evil 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1998
■ **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

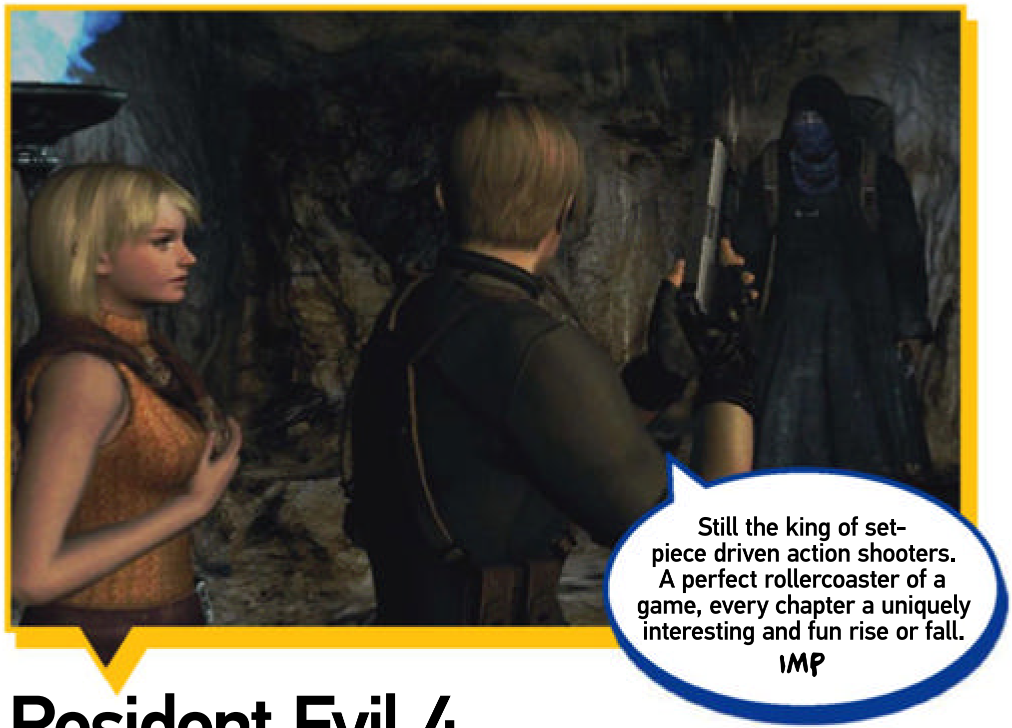
3 **Despite its troubled** development, which saw the first attempt (now known as *Resident Evil 1.5*) scrapped, *RE2* clawed through to live up to the hype and expectations. With Shinji Mikami forced into in a producer role, direction duties fell to Hideki Kamiya, with both working from a new story by scriptwriting company Flagship. This setup delivered an action-packed entry that expanded the world brilliantly, introducing two new iconic heroes in Claire Redfield and Leon Kennedy and telling a larger story that took place in multiple locations. Its most innovative feature, though, was the popular 'Zapping' system, which saw Leon and Claire's scenarios overlap at certain points in the game to offer fans a great deal of replayability.



Final Fight

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1989
■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

2 ***Final Fight* started** life as a sequel to *Street Fighter* before *Double Dragon*'s success spurred the design change to side-scrolling combat. With the choice of three distinct heroes, *Final Fight* had players hit the mean streets of Metro City to rescue a mayor's daughter from the Mad Gear gang. The sense of friendship between its main players Cody, Guy and Haggar was weirdly powerful, the bosses they faced were big and imposing, and the action solid, fluid and greatly satisfying. Overall though, *Final Fight* just captured the feel of an Eighties martial-arts movie better than any game before or since. It's a winning formula that countless scrolling fighters have tried to capture but few have succeeded. Even the sequels struggled.



Resident Evil 4

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM PRODUCTION STUDIO 4 ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 2005 ■ **GENRE:** THIRD-PERSON SHOOTER

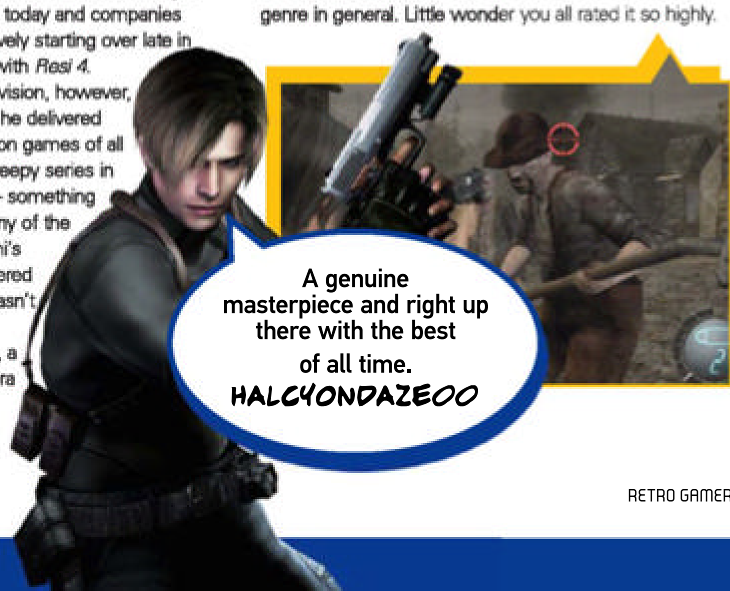
1 **It's little wonder** that this magnificent game is sitting in your number one spot, as it's easily one of the greatest games from its era, and certainly the best *Resident Evil* game (sorry, but it's true). Like *Resident Evil 2* before it, Capcom's game had a turbulent development time, and just like Capcom's original sequel, it redefined the survival-horror genre upon its release and influenced countless other franchises as well.

Without *Resident Evil 4* you wouldn't have *Gears Of War*, *Uncharted*, *Dead Space*, *Mass Effect*, *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and countless other third-person titles that have benefited enormously from the tech first created in Capcom's groundbreaking game. You also wouldn't have many of the barnstorming set pieces that most videogames now take for granted, and while the likes of *God Of War* would up the ante for gigantic over-the-top boss encounters in the intervening years, it was Capcom that got there first.

And yet, for all its influence, it's easy to forget just how brave Capcom was when it released *RE4*. Taking an established series in a bold new direction was just as dangerous in 2004 as it is today and companies would never consider effectively starting over late in development, as happened with *Resi 4*. Director Shinji Mikami had a vision, however, and by sticking to that vision he delivered one of the most exciting action games of all time. Yes, it took the once creepy series in a more bombastic direction – something which greatly displeased many of the staff at the time – but Mikami's gamble paid off and he delivered a game that, for many, still hasn't been bettered.

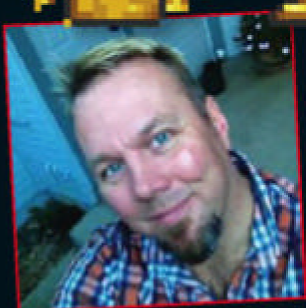
Context-sensitive controls, a new over-the-shoulder camera and laser targeting (which allows you to pick up specific parts of your enemies) were just a few of the many new mechanics that Mikami introduced to the series, and the end result was a game so epic, it needed to be supplied on two GameCube discs. Mikami played on the love of fans, reintroducing Leon S Kennedy as the main protagonist and sending him out into the Spanish wilderness in search of the president's daughter. While some would baulk at the overuse of the same key enemies, there was no denying that the world Mikami and his team had created was a dynamic one, delivering a depth of detail in its environments that previous *Resident Evil* games had only hinted at.

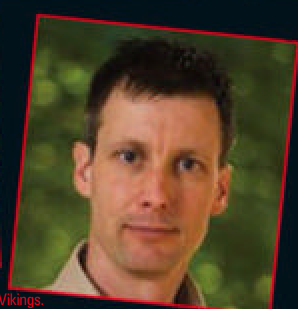
It wasn't just superlative graphics that gave *Resident Evil 4* the edge over its competitors: it was also a masterpiece in game design and pacing, never slowing and constantly throwing something new at you. Add in some incredible boss encounters that ranged from being dragged across a lake by a huge behemoth and fighting the trolls from *The Lord Of The Rings* (well that's what they looked like) and *Resident Evil 4* became a benchmark for both the franchise and the genre in general. Little wonder you all rated it so highly.





THE LOST VIKINGS™





» Ron Millar and Patrick Wyatt: The men behind the Vikings.

Presented with the opportunity to pitch an original title to publishing partner Interplay, developer Silicon & Synapse was soon brainstorming ideas. Graeme Mason the stout explores what happened next. . .

In 1994, Californian developer Silicon & Synapse became Blizzard Entertainment; later that year it released its breakthrough hit, the RTS game *Warcraft* (read all about it in Retro Gamer 111) and became the gaming giant we know and love today. Rewind to 1992, however, and it was chiefly known for porting several Amiga games and the minor Super Nintendo hit *RPM Racing*. Its first crack at an original title – and a key moment in the company's history – was just around the corner.

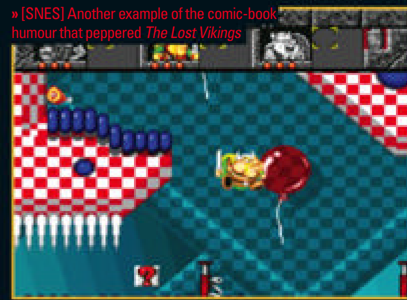
Working at the developer were artist/animator Ron Millar and programmer Patrick Wyatt, who would contribute initial level design and tools programming to *The Lost Vikings*. "Allen [Adham, one of Silicon & Synapse's two founders] had a chance to pitch our own game to Interplay's Brian Fargo," begins Ron, "and so we started thinking up ideas for what we could do." Other creatives within S&S received the same call to arms. "There were lots of proposals," recalls Patrick, "but the winner was Ron's idea of creating a game like *Lemmings*, but using Vikings instead." It sounds like a Hollywood-style pitch ('Lemmings meets Vikings'), but how exactly did our Scandinavian friends get to star in their own game? "Well, I was a long-haired, heavy-metal worshipping twenty-something," laughs Ron, "and we all loved *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Conan*, *Gauntlet* and all that kinda stuff. Plus I guess we just wanted to have cool, tough bad-ass characters in our games!" Despite being primarily an artist and animator, Ron soon found himself heavily involved in the game's design: "There were no real roles back then – everyone pitched in where they could and sometimes you found yourself doing things, such as level design, because you were either into it or had an aptitude for it." As a result, most of *The Lost Vikings* team (which included programmers Michael Morhaime and Frank Pearce) would have a say in its planning stage.

But we spring back to the original idea now, as Ron and the team held several informal design sessions, laughing at his scribbles of "little Viking guys doing funny *Lemmings* stuff and meeting their doom in different ways". Over the course of the next few weeks, the game

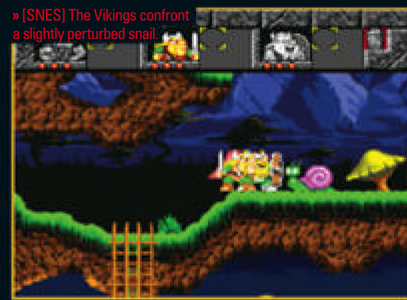




» [Mega Drive] You'll need to use each Viking's skills in order to make progress.



» [SNES] Another example of the comic-book humour that peppered *The Lost Vikings*



» [SNES] The Vikings confront a slightly perturbed snail.

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** INTERPLAY ENTERTAINMENT

» **DEVELOPER:** SILICON & SYNAPSE

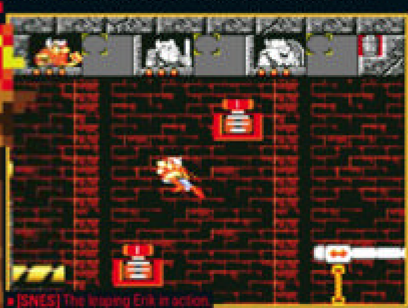
» **RELEASED:** 1992

» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, AMIGA CD32, GAME BOY ADVANCE, MS-DOS, MEGA DRIVE, SNES

» **GENRE:** PLATFORM/PUZZLE

evolved, partly for technical reasons and partly stemming from a desire to move away from the *Lemmings* template. "We began to focus on the player controlling only five Vikings," ponders Patrick, "and had a few ideas for characters such as a swordsman, archer, shield-bearer, runner and berserker." As the design continued to deviate from its suicidal rodent origins, the key element of direct control came into play. The player would no longer simply give commands and watch the results; they would now have to rely on their own dexterity. Ron explains the technical reason for reducing the number of characters: "The Lemmings were cool, but this was a console game first and foremost and I think we started to discover that tiny characters didn't look so good on screen and controlling them was too tough with a pad."

At this point there were five brave, bewildered Vikings but it would soon become just three. Patrick Wyatt's principal role so far had been designing



» [SNES] The leaping Erik in action.

> "The winner was Ron's idea of creating a game like Lemmings, but using Vikings instead" PATRICK WYATT

the levels for the five-character party. "As we had no tools to do so, I sketched a number of levels and puzzles on paper," he reveals, the latter based on the various attributes the Scandinavian warriors had been assigned. "After struggling through a number of these levels, I urged that the number of characters should be trimmed down because controlling five characters required too much switching and too many escape routes for the unused Vikings." Patrick did briefly consider an 'intelligent' Viking to save the player some of the more onerous tasks, but it proved too complicated to implement. Ultimately there was one clear solution – two Vikings had to go. "It was the right decision," he says, "as having fewer Vikings and coalescing the skills into three characters made the game much more fun to play." The remaining three Vikings were to become the errant heroes of the game and were bigger, easier to animate and simpler to control.

Like many of Blizzard's early games, the graphics had a cartoon style. "I thought the final portrayal of the Vikings was great," smiles Patrick, "distinctly recognisable because of the adherence to the Western perception – horned helmets, blond hair – yet very comical and brightly coloured to stand out from



Trivia File

Additional insight into Interplay's quirky puzzler

■ The team for *The Lost Vikings* included artists Sam Didier, Stu Rose and Joeyray Hall, programmers Michael Morhaime and Frank Pearce and sound by Charles Deenan.

■ The plot begins with the three Vikings kidnapped by Tomator, evil emperor of the Croutonian empire, so that he can display them in his intergalactic zoo.

■ The levels were originally designed on graph paper by Ron and the team. "Something about pencil and graph paper is magical to me when it comes to level design," grins Ron.

■ Ron was adamant that there be no unfair hidden traps in the game: "I liked it when players could use their brains to figure stuff out and get through on one go."

■ In addition to *Lemmings*, Ron Millar cites pinball game *Devil's Crush* as another early influence.

■ Both Ron and Patrick proclaim the original SNES version of *The Lost Vikings* as the best. "The 256 colours of the Super Nintendo version help make it far superior to the Genesis version," says Patrick.

■ The Lost Vikings live on today thanks to several guest appearances in other Blizzard games, latterly as NPCs in *World Of Warcraft*.

■ And finally… Olaf's ability to fart his way across a room almost didn't make it in the final game as Ron reveals there were "mixed feelings" from several of the team, despite everyone finding it *really* funny.

Partners in Crime

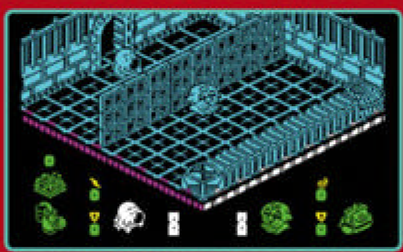
Other classic videogames that see you controlling multiple characters



DEACTIVATORS (1986)

■ Controlling a team of bomb disposal robots, this attractive isometric puzzle game requires some serious thought and dexterity to solve its devious latter levels. While each robot is identical in characteristics, it is vital they work together in order to avoid being blown into smithereens.

HEAD OVER HEELS (1987)



■ Jon Ritman's isometric 8-bit classic tasks the player with reuniting the eponymous creatures who, much like the wayward Vikings, possess individual traits. Head can jump higher than Heels and fire doughnuts; Heels runs faster than Head and can carry objects in his bag. Combining the two skilfully is the only way to progress.



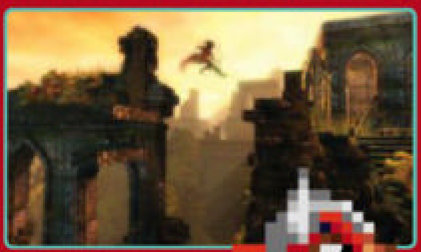
MANIAC MANSION (1987)

■ Lucasfilm's seminal point-and-click game also utilises three characters – although you get to choose two companions from a group of six. Each character has – yes! – their own abilities and weaknesses, and how you use them (as well as which ones you choose) affects the game, all the way up to its conclusion.

GOBLIIINS (1991)



■ Released a year prior to *The Lost Vikings*, *Gobliiins* was created by French developer Coktel Vision and requires the player to switch between characters in order to progress to the next screen. Inevitably, each Goblin has their own set of skills such as punching, zapping and being able to pick up objects.



TRINE (2009)

■ Bearing many similarities to *The Lost Vikings*, this magical fantasy adventure has the player once more switching control between three different (if somewhat stereotypical) characters: a thief, wizard and knight. Unlike *The Lost Vikings*, Trine contains a nifty drop in/out multiplayer co-op feature.

> "There is always more you want to do, yet time, money and platform constraints are always there to stop you"
>
> RON MILLAR

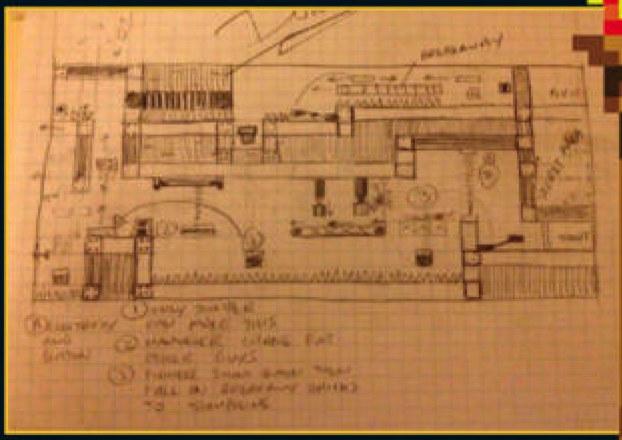


» [Mega Drive] Each Viking can carry up to four items and give them to their friends.

the background. It was the direct antecedent of the art in *Warcraft*: colourful and cartoony." In addition to the art style, other aspects, such as the names, were infused with humour, as Ron explains. "That started when we asked one of the artists' kids to name the bad guy and his people and they said 'Tomator' and the 'Croutonians'. I remember thinking that's ridiculous, but also funny, in a Monty Python kinda way."

The prime version of *The Lost Vikings* was to be on the SNES thanks to Silicon & Synapse's experience on the console and a scripting engine that Allen Adham had written under contract for Interplay and had cunningly retained the rights to use. "It gave us a rock-solid and battle-tested engine," remarks Patrick, "although it did need additional work. Other programmers on the team spent a lot of time working on collision problems and it also had its limitations. For example, a Viking could not push a block that pushed another block. It just didn't work."

So, with the upgraded engine in place, the Vikings whittled down to three and the humorous tone established, it was time to get busy designing those tricky levels. In order to give the team as much licence as possible to create weird and wonderful scenes for the Vikings to



» All of *The Lost Vikings'* levels were first developed on graph paper.

escape from, a time-travelling plot was quickly introduced. "We used time-travel as a mechanism to visit exotic areas such as ancient Egypt, outer space and wacky world," explains Patrick, "because we just wanted to make the levels as visually distinct as possible."

The gameplay to *The Lost Vikings* is, by necessity, a little more complex than your average platform game. By means of switching between the three heroes, each level presents a series of obstacles that can only be overcome by combining the different strengths of each Viking – further complicated by the vulnerability of the inactive characters. Erik the Swift can jump, run and bash through walls with his helmet; Baleog the Fierce wields a sword and shoots arrows; and Olaf the Stout can use his shield not only to block attacks but to glide through the air and to stand on to reach switches. Combining all three characters and traits is essential to making progress, resulting in *The Lost Vikings* becoming more of a puzzle game than a simple platformer.

On that note, we ask Ron and Patrick if they ever worried the gameplay would be potentially too involved for the average gamer. "Not really," laughs Ron, "we were super-novices back then and we built our games as we'd like to play – we didn't really think too much about the player in those days!" Patrick agrees – and disagrees. "We were all hardcore gamers back then and, while we endeavoured to focus on simple gameplay, we didn't have enough experience to make the


» [Mega Drive] As well as time-travelling, the Vikings get to visit this strange candy world.

> "Controlling five characters required too much character-switching"
> PATRICK WYATT

game straightforward enough. I think *Vikings* was a little too complicated to be mainstream."

Another aspect the team were keen to push through was one that the game naturally lent itself to: multiplayer. "I can't tell you how many times back then I'd be playing a console game and my friends just had to watch or take turns," recalls Ron, "and it was something we wanted to fix, to allow the experience to be shared

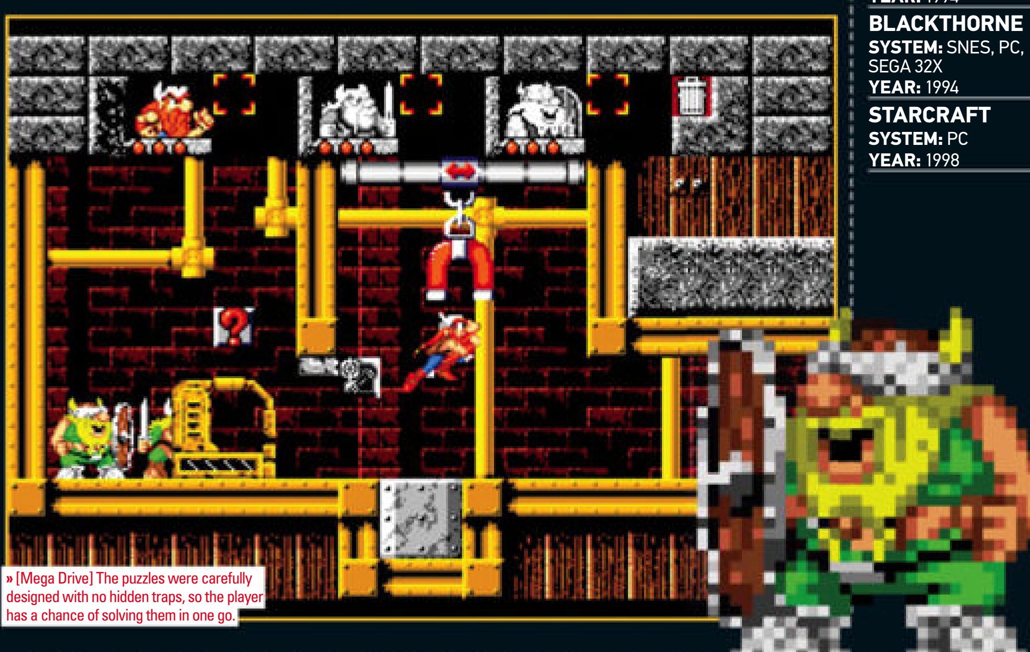


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WARCRAFT
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1994

BLACKTHORNE
SYSTEM: SNES, PC, SEGA 32X
YEAR: 1994

STARCRAFT
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1998


» [Mega Drive] The puzzles were carefully designed with no hidden traps, so the player has a chance of solving them in one go.

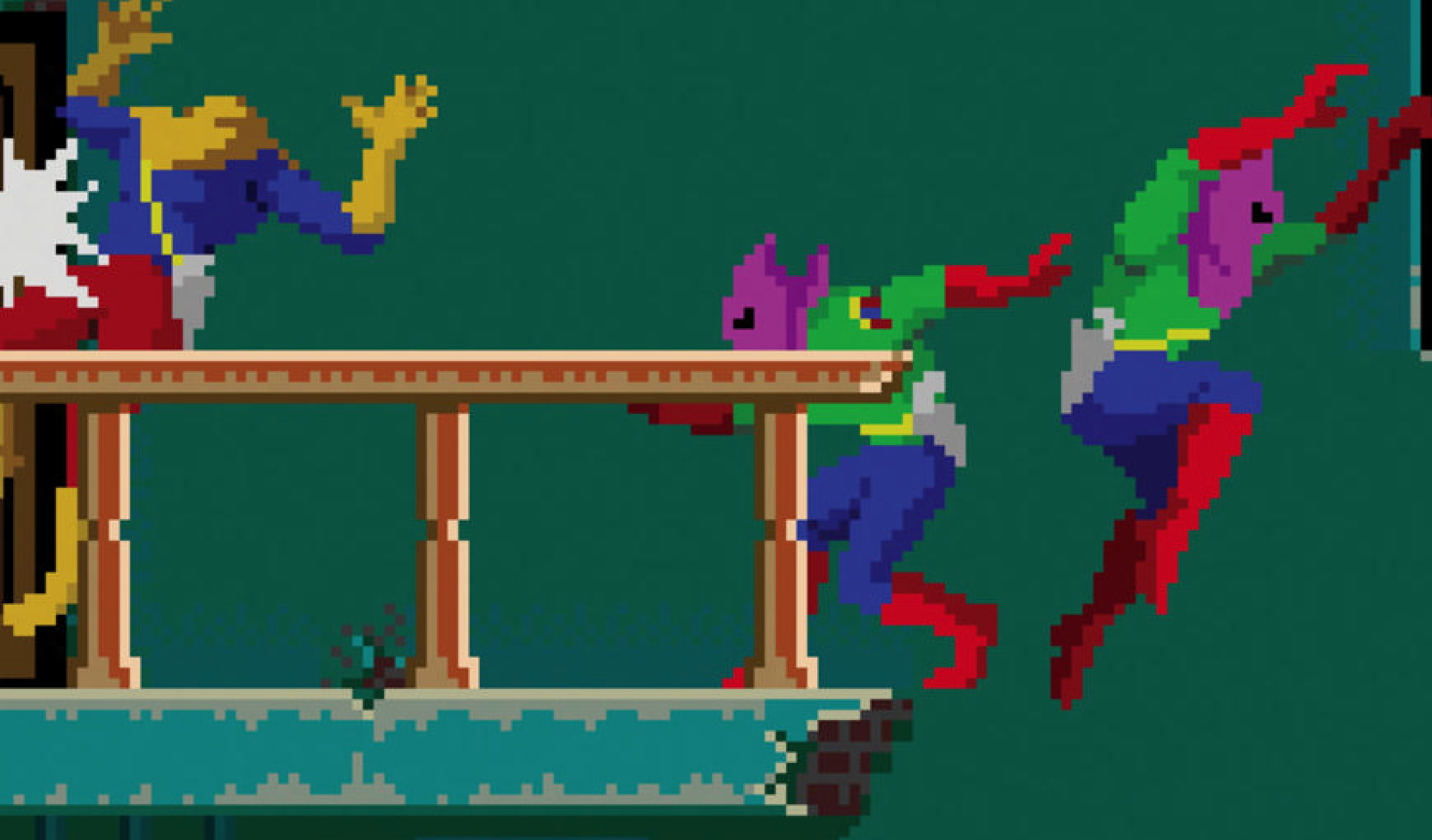
with people in your living room." Says Patrick: "It was fun to play the two-player mode, but it wasn't as super-addictive as it could have been. We should have enabled drop in/drop out multiplayer, although it was still a good learning experience."

Blizzard's famous path to multiplayer success, culminating with the incredibly successful MMORPG *World Of Warcraft*, can be traced back to here. Yet, like many Interplay games, *The Lost Vikings* had a comparatively low budget and the high risks associated with the more expensive high-memory cartridges meant the game was squeezed into a lower-capacity cart. The biggest compromise for this was aurally as the Viking voices were coded into colourful speech bubbles – although given the amount of dialogue in the game, it's uncertain it would have been possible to have speech, even with the bigger cartridges. "There is always more you want to do, yet time, money and platform constraints are always there to stop you," frowns Ron.

The Lost Vikings took Silicon & Synapse approximately 11 months to develop on the SNES, with the Sega Mega Drive version following up six months later. Sadly, it was not the biggest seller, despite inspiring a sequel four years later. This, coupled with the slow demise of the 16-bit market, led S&S down the road of PC development, something it has managed very successfully since converting to Blizzard in 1994. "Our [SNES] games, while good, simply didn't compete with titles like Nintendo's *Donkey Kong Country*," muses Patrick, "and this, along with the end of the 16-bits, led us to develop on the PC so we had more control over our destiny."

Nevertheless, a favourable critical reception for *The Lost Vikings*, together with the frenzied *Rock N' Roll Racing*, led to Silicon & Synapse being named as Nintendo's developer of the year in 1993. "*The Lost Vikings* was our first original game," states Ron, "and set us in motion to make more original games." Notes Patrick: "*Vikings* was the game that made us believe we had a chance at being successful as game inventors and not just as a work-for-hire studio." And perhaps, most vitally, its development taught the fledgling developers more about themselves than anything else. "We were all brought together as a team and learned a lot of things – together," remembers Ron contemplatively, "and it was also really cool to build a game that was our own and then watch it become something real. Something people enjoyed."





Rolling Thunder

GETTING A SUDDEN IMPACT FROM NAMCO'S RUN-AND-GUN GAME

» RETROREVIVAL



» ARCADE
» NAMCO
» 1986

I remember Namco's *Rolling Thunder* causing quite a stir when I first encountered it in my local arcade (Poole Quay Amusements if you're wondering). I was no stranger to run-and-guns, having played everything from *Commando* to *Ghosts 'N Goblins,* but Namco's game felt very different to everything that had come before it.

For starters it looked fantastic, being a world away from the drab stylings of similar games. Powered by Namco's 'System 86' hardware, it delivered bright primary colours, larger-than-life sprites and felt like a Japanese anime come to life. Then there was the fact that you were playing as Agent Albatross, a suave James Bond wannabe, who simply oozed cool as he took on the forces of the evil crime syndicate Geldra.

Mechanically *Rolling Thunder* impressed as well, thanks mainly to the excellent jump system it employed. *Rolling Thunder*'s stages often consisted of raised platforms that created an upper and low tier. Unlike ladders, which would link these levels in previous games, Agent Albatross was able to move gracefully between these two tiers, often allowing him to escape danger or get the drop on a particularly deadly foe. It's a neat mechanic that was used in many later games.

Doors were just as abundant as *Rolling Thunder*'s many platforms, and were another key mechanic that the game employed to great effect. Agent Albatross's gun only had a set amount of bullets that were quickly used up due to the large amount of enemies that attacked you. Additional bullets (and guns) could be found behind certain doors, so you could refill and continue the fight against Geldra. There was a caveat, however… Refilling took a few precious seconds, meaning enemies had the potential to gather and take you out as you reappeared. And take you out they would, because *Rolling Thunder* was a tough game assaulting you with a range of enemies that ranged from the humanoid Maskers to panthers and giant bats.

Sega's excellent *Shinobi* and Namco's own sequel – proper two-player action for the win – may have bettered *Rolling Thunder*, but I'll never forget the impact it first made on me all those years ago.


35
YEARS

INVASION OF THE COIN SNATCHER

AS SPACE INVADERS CELEBRATES ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY, STUART HUNT SPEAKS TO ITS CREATOR TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO AND LOOKS BACK AT THE CULTURAL AND INDUSTRY IMPACT OF HIS GAME




» Tomohiro Nishikado made several games before he created *Space Invaders*.



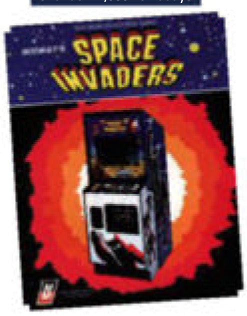
» [Arcade] Shooting the UFO will net you bonus points. Careful, it's really quick.

Before *Space Invaders*, videogames weren't viewed as they are today. Taito's seminal shooter is seen as the turning point, the game that convinced the world that these tall bleeping TV cabinets projecting moving interactive shapes were not a passing novelty but a form of entertainment with the potential to be as popular as music and film.

Because of this, *Space Invaders* is and will likely forever be synonymous with the medium of videogames. Its iconic blocky alien enemies have appeared on everything from greetings cards to wall art. And the franchise, in spite of its age and simplistic gameplay, continues to reinvent itself even to this day, as demonstrated by the excellent *Space Invaders Infinity Gene*.

What impresses as much as the game's generation-stretching impact, though, is the fact that it was created by one man. From the basic concept and hardware, to its graphics, sound and gameplay, Tomohiro Nishikado is responsible for it all.

» The original cabinet in all its glory. Don't expect to get one for under £1,000 nowadays.



"After graduating from university I worked at an audio-related company," begins Nishikado when we ask him to tell us how his videogame journey began. "I left after a year and just as I was looking for a new employer, I had a chance meeting with a former colleague from the audio company. He was already working at Taito and recommended it to me as well. I wasn't so much looking to become a game designer as I was hoping to make the most of my electronics skills."

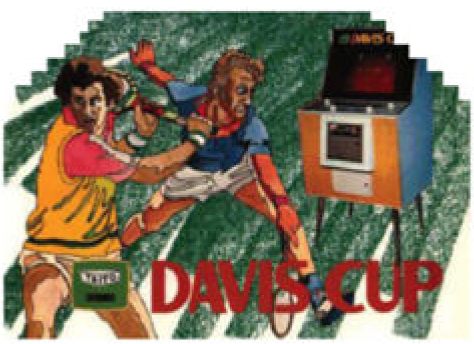
To begin with, Nishikado was involved in developing electromechanical games, but that changed when Atari's *Pong* hit Japan. The popularity of the bat-and-ball game was enough to convince Taito to refocus efforts on creating fully electronic games, and Nishikado was responsible for helping drive this change.

"I analysed *Pong* and set about making new, original videogames (as opposed to mechanical ones). I designed ten of them, including *Speed Race* and *Western Gun*. All of these games were logic IC-based designs, not microcomputer-based. I developed these games almost completely by myself."

Thanks to his engineering skills, Nishikado soon found himself drawn deeper into game design. His though wasn't an uncommon route into this world. Back then technicians and engineers often *were* game designers. Possessing the knowledge and understanding of what could not be achieved with the limited technology that was available, they were seen as the best people for the job.

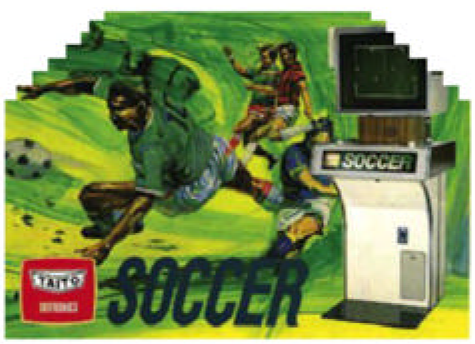
BEFORE SPACE INVADERS

WE LOOK BACK AT NISHIKADO'S EARLIER GAMES PRIOR TO HITTING THE BIG TIME WITH SPACE INVADERS



DAVIS CUP

■ As the title implies, *Davis Cup* was a tennis-themed *Pong* variant in which players could control two paddles – to simulate a game of doubles. *Davis Cup* could be played by four players simultaneously and offered both single and doubles play.



SOCCER

■ *Soccer* was another twist on *Pong*'s bat-and-ball formula. In this example players controlled a striker and a goalkeeper joined by other static team-mates, represented by paddles which players could adjust the size of.



ASTRO RACE

■ This competitive space-themed racer, believed to be the first of its kind, saw players racing in a meteoroid field. With something resembling a split-screen mode, players had to get their ship to the top of the screen without a collision (think *Frogger* in space).

In terms of *Space Invaders*' theme and core gameplay design, Nishikado revealed in our making-of feature in issue 62 that the alien invasion concept originated from two sources: *Star Wars* and the 1953 film adaptation of HG Wells' *The War Of The Worlds* – the movie's manta-ray-shaped Martian war machines inspiring the octopus and crab-like alien designs in the game. Nishikado also revealed that Atari's *Breakout* was the biggest influence on the gameplay of *Space Invaders*; when you put both games side by side, this becomes plain – simply replace its blocks with aliens, the paddle with a laser cannon and you near enough have the same game.

Nishikado expanded *Breakout*'s core formula greatly, though, introducing targets that fired back and menacingly descended on players, as well as deformable defences that could be used for cover. From a gameplay perspective, *Space Invaders* was also simple to grasp. It had a wonderfully straightforward difficulty curve: the more aliens you blasted away, the faster the remainder of the pack moved; and when a wave was successfully defeated, the game served up a more challenging one. Of course, the other thing that contributed to *Space Invaders*' success was the iconic alien enemies. The stars of the show, they were some of first videogame characters to exude a sense of menace and personality, and this is something that struck a big chord with many people.

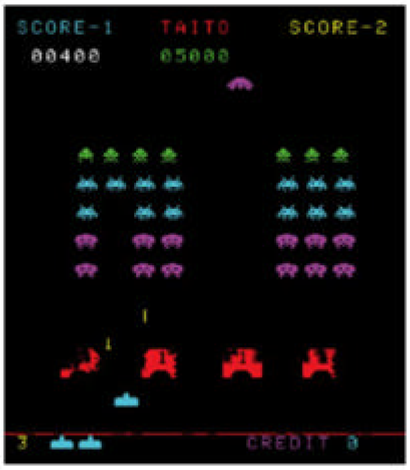
"I came across the magic, mirrored masterpiece at either South Cliff Amusements or the chip shop on West Street (can't remember)," recalls Andy Walker, founder of C64 software house Taskset. "It was learnable, fast, it had an automatic crescendo as they marched down the screen, and with wry humour – that great touch of the 'Y' in play being upside down and corrected by one of the invaders, it was the first 'attitude' and 'soul' expressed by a videogame character that I can remember."

When *Space Invaders* neared completion, Nishikado showed it to his colleagues within Taito's development department. Their reactions were encouraging enough to convince him that it held appeal. However, there were some higher-ups at Taito who were still unconvinced: "Unlike the development department, the upper echelons of the sales department were very sceptical. They told me that the game needed a lot of work to be a hit. Later on we held private shows for members of the arcade industry, and their reaction wasn't very favourable either."

"THEY TOLD ME THE GAME NEEDED A LOT OF WORK TO BE A HIT"
TOMOHIRO NISHIKADO

Nishikado wasn't worried, though, as the game wasn't aimed at them. "While *Space Invaders* wasn't the first shooting game, most to that point had the player shooting down passive targets to rack up points. *Space Invaders* had the enemies shoot back; I think that was especially exciting to the youthful arcade audience. The upper level sales staff and arcade operators felt the Invaders' attacks made the game too difficult, but they were also a lot older than the game's players. I also think that the feeling of exhilaration that comes with systematically wiping out a screen full of targets was important to the game's success."

Taking 12 months to create, *Space Invaders* was released in Japan in July 1978. It quickly became a cultural phenomenon that elevated videogames from electronic curios into the major entertainment industry that they today. There are various urban myths connected to the cultural and even economic impact its release had – from causing a temporary 100-yen coin shortage as people flocked to surrender money to machines, to inciting juvenile crime as kids turned to stealing money to feed their obsessions with the game.



» [Arcade] Taito's second *Space Invaders* game featured proper colour visuals.



WESTERN GUN

■ Another *Pong* variant, this one saw the paddles become duelling cowboys shooting at one another from opposite sides of the screen. Said to be the first videogame to show two human sprites attacking one another, it's often seen as the granddaddy of the fighting game.



ROAD CHAMPION

■ Taking the Astro Race concept and applying it to a proper car racing scenario, many writers cite *Road Champion* as the first true racing videogame. It had a scrolling track, rival racers and controls made up of a gas pedal, steering wheel and gearstick.



INTERCEPTOR

■ In this early and impressive first-person shooter, players piloted a jet fighter from inside its cockpit and used a targeting crosshair to shoot down enemy planes that travelled in formations and scaled in size.

THE INVADERS ARE COMING

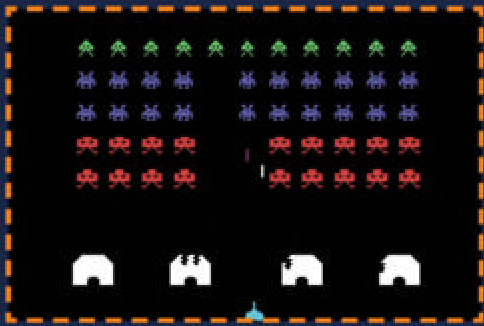
AS SPACE INVADERS HAS SPAWNED MORE CLONES THAN JANGO FETT, WE THOUGHT WE'D TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE BETTER SPACE INVADERS IMITATORS



SPACE ARMADA

DEVELOPER: MATTEL
YEAR: 1981 SYSTEM: INTELLIVISION

■ With chunky graphics and sound, *Space Armada* feels like chubby *Space Invaders*. As such, the playing field feels claustrophobic, though the gameplay is fairly on the money. This version has deformable defences and a mystery mothership target that awards bonus points. Having different alien bullet types is also a nice touch.



TI INVADERS

DEVELOPER: TEXAS INSTRUMENTS
YEAR: 1981 SYSTEM: TI-99/4A

■ In this popular TI version you have two levels of difficulty to choose from and a neat bonus round where you can rack up extra points by changing the direction of a mothership by repeatedly hitting it. The graphics are nice and crisp, the controls responsive and overall it's a decent little *Space Invaders* clone.



SNEAKERS

DEVELOPER: SIRIUS SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1981 SYSTEM: APPLE II

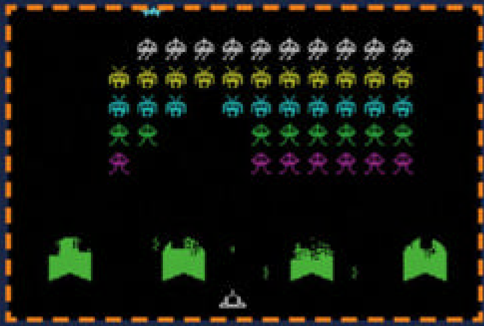
■ Written by Mark Turmell (*NBA Jam*, *Smash TV*) for the Apple II, *Sneakers* has more variety than other 'invader' games. It features eight different waves, each with its own enemy that requires a different strategy to defeat, with the exception of one stage whereby you must safely navigate a meteoroid and asteroid field.



AVENGER

DEVELOPER: ATARI YEAR: 1981
SYSTEM: COMMODORE 64, VIC-20, COMMODORE MAX

■ This splendid little clone for Commodore computers looks like an official conversion. All the sprites, from the bunkers to the aliens, look accurate and the game plays well thanks to responsive controls and smooth animation – save for the aliens who retain that lovely shuffle movement.



SPECTRAL INVADERS

DEVELOPER: DAVID H LAWSON
YEAR: 1981 SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM

■ If issue 13 of *Computer & Videogames* is to be believed then *Spectral Invaders* was the first 'invaders' game for the ZX Spectrum, though it isn't a great *Space Invaders* clone to be honest. The player-cannon moves too slow and the kill animations are delayed, meaning you're frequently questioning whether your shots are on target.



SPACE RAIDERS

DEVELOPER: PSION
YEAR: 1982 SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM

■ This ZX Spectrum game is one of the best *Space Invaders* clones you could play. It nails the look of the game, the enemy-to-screen ratio is great, waves feature 55 aliens and the animation is also spot-on with the aliens shuffling left to right in lines rather than in unison as in many other clones.



INVADERS

DEVELOPER: TEXAS IJK
YEAR: 1982 SYSTEM: BBC, ACORN ELECTRON

■ There are also two versions of IJK's *Invaders* (Model A and B versions). The B version features better graphics and a plethora of options, from adjusting the speed of aliens and their bullets to turning the aliens invisible. The Model A version is the most an abstract-looking clone out there, with alien sprites represented by blocky shapes.





» [Atari 2600] *Space Invaders* was a killer app on Atari 2600, with over 100 game modes.



PEPSI INVADERS

DEVELOPER: ATARI
YEAR: 1983 SYSTEM: ATARI 2600

■ *Pepsi Invaders* was an in-house business gift that Coca-Cola commissioned from Atari. Taking a swipe at its biggest rival, the enemy targets spelled out the word Pepsi and the mothership was the Pepsi logo. Never released at retail, and with only a hundred or so copies made, it's the rarest *Space Invaders* clone out there.



BANDITS

DEVELOPER: SIRIUS SOFTWARE
YEAR: 1983 SYSTEM: VARIOUS

■ This splendid shooter by Sirius Software, which sees you protecting fruity supplies from alien bandits, plays like a mix of *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*. As the aliens peel off into packs and fly towards the precious goods, you must quickly shoot them down before they make off with any.

INVADE-A-LOAD!

DEVELOPER: RICHARD APLIN
YEAR: 1987 SYSTEM: C64

■ A neat *Space Invaders* mini-game designed to entertain while the main game loaded, *Invade-A-Load!* appeared on a few budget releases (mostly from Mastertronic) and offered a pretty authentic game of *Space Invaders*. This version is incredibly hard, though, and ends abruptly once a game has loaded. But what do you expect? It was a bonus.

"I didn't get to experience the original boom, but even as a kid in a rural town I was well aware of the game, so it's clear that it had a huge impact on Japanese popular culture," remembers Reisuke Ishida, director of *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* and self-confessed *Space Invaders* super-fan. "Even in my arcade-deprived town, I could go to a friend's house and see *Space Invaders* merchandise, or turn on the TV and see *Space Invaders*-themed anime. It became very familiar during my childhood."

Space Invaders mania spread to the US the following year when it was picked up and distributed by Midway Manufacturing. The latter started development of its own arcade version in August 1978. The graphics in its US version had a neat semi-translucent quality, created by having the visuals reflected through a mirror and projected on a painted background of a lunar surface. Colour was also cleverly added through coloured cellophane overlays, a technique Atari also utilised in many of its early 'colour' games (*Breakout* being a good example). These tricks greatly enhanced the black and white visuals of the standard and 'TT Space Invaders' cocktail versions that were released in Japan, although some standard Taito models also used the cellophane strip trick.

> **"IT'S CLEAR IT HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE"**
> REISUKE ISHIDA

In the US the effects of *Space Invaders*' popularity was felt both in the coin-op and domestic videogame market. The home market had taken a bit of battering due to the 1978 videogame crash which was caused by *Pong* clones saturating the marketplace, and so, fortunately for Atari – whose bosses were left scratching their heads trying to work out what to do with the some 250,000 VCS consoles in a beleaguered market – *Space Invaders* arrived at a crucial time.

After Atari's then president Ray Kassar successfully secured the home videogame rights, Atari quickly put its own VCS conversion into production. It was a canny manoeuvre that quadrupled the sales of the VCS home console and gave it the critical boost it needed to start ruling domestic gaming in North America. Such was the demand for the game that *Space Invaders* became the first killer app for the VCS, with many purchasing Atari's console just to be able to play a version in their living rooms. It was an excellent conversion too. Though not an identical replica – it featured fewer bunkers and alien targets – the VCS port offered new alien types, over a hundred game variations, and even a simultaneous co-op mode.

Weirdly – although perhaps shrewdly in hindsight – Atari chose not sublicense the *Space Invaders* IP and allow versions of the game to appear on competitors' machines and computers, and this resulted in very few official conversions seeing release until the early Eighties. There was, however, one early port that slipped through the net.

During the early days of coin-op licensing, companies were still figuring out the system. These were relatively uncharted waters and, as such, many companies assumed that by having the licence of an arcade game, that gave them the freedom to release it on whatever format





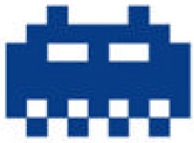
» [Xbox 360] Taito's hit game has constantly evolved over the years. This is the superb *Space Invaders Extreme*.

they liked. It was this belief that led to Bally/Midway releasing a version of *Space Invaders* on the Bally Professional Arcade/Astrocade in 1979, the same year Atari's official conversion was launched.

Atari had negotiated and was awarded the specific console licence for *Space Invaders* by January 1979 and with Bally/Midway unaware that such a deal was taking place, the Professional Arcade version had already been created and was entering distribution. When Bally/Midway learnt of the deal, it promptly changed the name of its port to *Astro Battle*. Atari took no legal action against Bally/Midway for *Astro Battle*'s likeness to *Space Invaders*, perhaps realising that it was the name that counted most.

Following the huge success of VCS *Space Invaders*, Atari and other companies began to see the money-making potential of securing these exclusive arcade licences. By the early Eighties, Atari had become a financial powerhouse and had no trouble securing the worldwide rights to the biggest hits for its machines.





One of the big factors that would eventually convince Atari to start sublicensing was the 2600 expansion units for the Colecovision and Intellivision by Mattel and Coleco. After a court ruled in favour for the units' release, Atari quickly realised it would be within its interests to start expanding game publishing to other platforms – a move that resulted in the formation of the Atarisoft label.

With a lack of official home conversions of *Space Invaders*, many software companies in the early Eighties got around the issue by programming their own versions. A game that was both popular and simplistic to recreate, *Space Invaders* therefore became one of the most cloned games of the early Eighties. In fact, some of the earliest games for the ZX Spectrum were 'invader' shooters inspired by Taito's classic.

Despite *Space Invaders*' global success and cultural impact, Nishikado's life remained the same. "Nothing really changed for me at the time," he told us. "The original game's hardware specs were low, so I set about planning new versions for more powerful hardware. The fact that I was responsible for *Space Invaders* wasn't known outside the company."

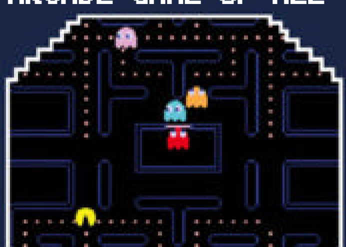
Like most crazes, *Space Invaders*' popularity was potent but short, and quickly Nishikado created a sequel. *Space Invaders Part II*, or *Space Invaders Deluxe*/*Deluxe Space Invaders* as it was known in the US, was released in 1979 and retained the core alien-blasting gameplay of the original. Once again players shot down wave after wave of descending alien attackers, but the gameplay was tweaked with new features that included enemies that were more aggressive, could split into packs of two (a feature Nishikado wanted to incorporate in the first game), and a flying saucer that dropped more aliens into the playing field. *Space Invaders Part II* was also in true colour, using no overlays, and featured animated intermissions between stages.

The games industry grew very quickly after the release of *Space Invaders*. Other games were quick to build on what Taito had achieved. Games like Namco's *Galaxian* would continue to make the 'invader game' popular, while later hits like Namco's *Pac-Man* and Nintendo's *Donkey Kong* kept the momentum going further with colourful cartoon graphics and less violent themes appealing to wider and more diverse audiences.

Taito's invasion had been quick and impactful, but served a very important purpose. Its Invaders had visited us and opened our eyes to a new form electronic entertainment, one that would change the world forever.

PRETTY PENNY ARCADE

WITH AROUND 360,000 HARDWARE UNITS SOLD, SPACE INVADERS IS THE BESTSELLING ARCADE GAME OF ALL TIME. SO WHAT ARE THE OTHER BIG SELLERS? WE TAKE A LOOK...



PAC-MAN

■ Coming close to taking *Space Invaders*' crown, *Pac-Man* was the next big game to hit arcades. Designed by Toru Iwatani, it too became a videogame phenomenon and by moving arcade themes away from space and sport themes and towards more whimsical worlds, succeeded in attracting female gamers.



STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION

■ Selling around double the number of units of the original, this update gave players access to the boss characters, mirror matches and improved the balancing issues between fighters. It sold like proverbial hot cakes.



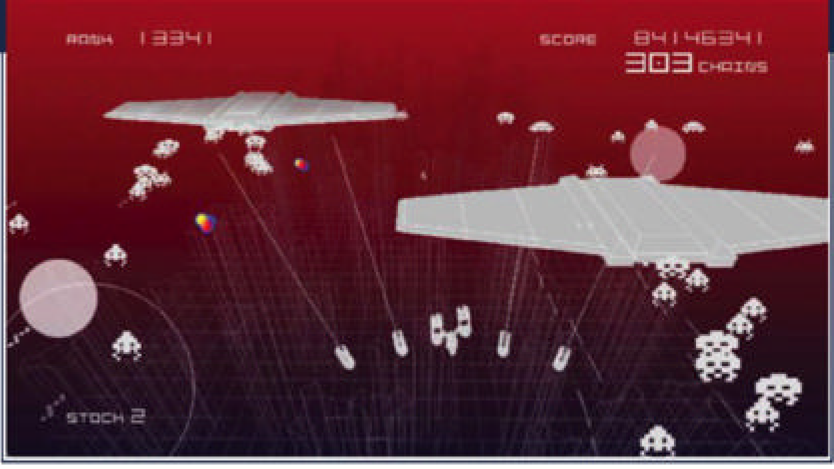
MS. PAC-MAN

■ This unauthorised sequel became so popular, it was officially inaugurated into the franchise by Namco. It started life as a *Pac-Man* enhancement kit called *Crazy Otto* before evolving into a sequel by a canny Midway, which understood that *Pac-Man* appealed to women and so created a female version.



ASTEROIDS

■ *Asteroids* is Atari's most successful arcade game ever and became a regular sight in amusement arcades. Essentially 360-degree *Space Invaders*, it boasted striking vector graphics and tense gameplay – cleverly coming from targets that broke into smaller, more dangerous pieces when shot.





REISUKE ISHIDA

THE DIRECTOR OF SPACE INVADERS INFINITY GENE DISCUSSES HIS LOVE OF SPACE INVADERS

Tell us how you became a game designer and came to work for Taito?
I dreamed of becoming a game designer ever since I was a child. I went to art college, where I briefly toyed with the idea of becoming a graphic designer, but because games fuse artwork, animation and music, in the end I decided that working in game design would allow me a wider variety of tools to express myself with. I joined Taito because I was a fan of their shooting games, and because at the time Taito was active on all manner of gaming platforms, from arcade to consoles. The potential to work on a wide variety of projects appealed to me. My respect for the original *Space Invaders* also played a large part in my decision, of course.

Is it true *Infinity Gene* came about as a result of an internal challenge at Taito to come up with a way of rejuvenating *Space Invaders* for its 30th anniversary?
While it's true there were plans to release a 30th anniversary game, I don't remember it being an open call for designs. My boss asked me directly if I was interested, and when I said I was, he told to me to submit an idea. His recollection of the conversation is hazy, though, so it's possible that other people were invited to participate as well. While I was working on *Space Invaders Infinity Gene*, the console division was independently working on *Space Invaders Extreme*, so I took special care to make my project as different as possible.

***Infinity Gene* was well received by fans. How happy were you with the finished game and the reception it received?**
With every game there are always some things I wish I could have done differently, but it seems like the themes I hoped to get across with *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* were successfully communicated to the players, so I'm extremely satisfied.

Can you recall the first time you saw *Space Invaders*? How old were you and what was your impression of it?
I was a little too young to experience the *Space Invaders* boom first-hand. I'm not sure when I first became aware of the game, but I was probably around four or five years old. My neighbourhood didn't have an arcade – I only knew the game from TV – but the unique pixel artwork strongly appealed to me. I didn't have a chance to play the game until I was around 11 years old, playing with my friend's Famicom [NES] version. Rather than anything specific to the gameplay itself, my primary thought at the time was 'So this is *Space Invaders*!'

Have you ever met *Space Invaders* creator Tomohiro Nishikado and if so, did he offer you any advice for *Space Invaders Infinity Gene*?
I've met Nishikado-san a number of times, but the first time wasn't until *Space Invaders Infinity Gene* was complete, so I never received any advice. When I showed him the game, however, he commented that he liked the simple screen design and sense of speed, which made my day.

How does it feel to have been involved in a series so popular and revered?
Space Invaders was the very first videogame I had ever seen, so when I was a child *Space Invaders* came to symbolise videogames and videogame culture as a whole. I've gone on to play a wide variety of videogames since then, but *Space Invaders*' position as a symbol of gaming has only become stronger. It's the king of games.

Some in the younger generation are unaware of the role of *Space Invaders* in the evolution of videogames and its cultural impact on the world. I wanted to share that with these players, which is what prompted me to display 'THE KING OF GAMES STRIKES BACK!' as the opening message in *Space Invaders Infinity Gene*.

Space Invaders Infinity Gene is the crystallisation of my thoughts and feelings about *Space Invaders* and its monumental role in gaming history. The fact that I was able to release an official successor to *Space Invaders* is a tremendous honour and source of pride for me.

Special thanks to Rory Smith for making this article possible

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FROM THE
ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Naughty Dog



From two ambitious school friends to the most creatively significant PlayStation developer of today, Naughty Dog co-founder Andy Gavin talks us through the company's impressive evolution

Whatever you were up to in school at age 12, it most likely didn't lay down your career path for the next 20 years. Naughty Dog co-founder Andy Gavin met his future creative partner Jason Rubin at this age in 1982 and, united by their fascination with programming on the Apple II+, the two learned how to make games through experimentation and collaboration. Naughty Dog is today renowned for its showstopping blend of cinematic storytelling with sharp gameplay mechanics, and the dizzying ambition of its two young co-founders led to those core principles.

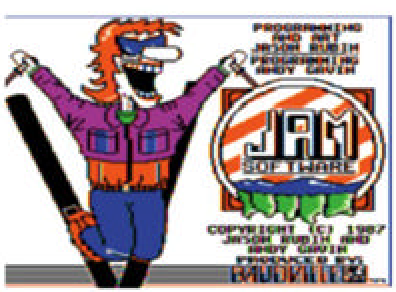
"The first game I ever programmed was a crude RPG called *VE2* that I wrote first on my school Heathkit and then on my Apple II+," explains Andy. "It had you wander around a fantasy world and randomly encounter orcs, kobolds and the like. It wasn't so different than a single-player text *Dark Tower*."

When they met, Jason's games looked superior, yet they frequently crashed; Andy's, on the other hand, were better programmed, yet lacked a certain visual flair. These complementary skills encapsulated their creative dynamic. "Fundamentally we shared a very similar vision for game making (make it cool!) and brought overlapping but different skills to the table," says Andy. "I was more technical and he was more artistic, but we were both very motivated and energetic. We used to joke years later that it would be difficult for any would-be third partner to keep up, even if only on account of our intensity."

Andy and Jason finished their first commercial Apple II title, *Ski Stud*, when they were both 15 (they'd completed another unpublished title, *Math Jam*, a year before). The duo struck a publishing deal with Baudville worth $250 for *Ski Stud* – renamed *Ski Crazed* for political correctness' sake. Their chosen moniker at the time was JAM Software, which they kept until 1989.

Greater success followed with adventure title *Dream Zone* on the Amiga, Atari ST and Apple II, which sold 10,000 copies and marked their final game to be published by Baudville. "The guys at Baudville were very nice and supportive," Andy explains. "But the company had poor distribution, minor league resources, and a laid-back approach. There was a lot of 'woah, duuuude.' Jason and I were far too ambitious to stick around in that environment."

While selling well, *Dream Zone* was still short of a smash for the pair. "Big hit isn't the word I would use, but it was much more 'real' and substantial than *Ski Crazed*. Signing with EA (right after *Dream Zone*) was a big confidence boost and we had to really take things up a notch (although there were many, many more notches until *Crash Bandicoot*!)."



» [Apple II] The title screen of *Ski Crazed* with Jam Software logo. Is it us or does he look a little like Crash Bandicoot?

INSTANT EXPERT

***The Simpsons* creator** Matt Groening was a fan of the early *Crash* games – he said so on the DVD commentary to the episode 'Lisa Gets An 'A' ', which aired in 1998, where a *Crash*-like game called *Dash Dingo* forms a central part of the episode's storyline.

The original name for Naughty Dog, JAM, stood for 'Jason and Andy's Magic'.

Three of the *Crash* games rank in the 20 bestselling titles on PSone. The series shipped 30 million units on the console across four games.

***Crash Bash* is** the only PSone *Crash* title that Naughty Dog didn't work on, being released after the studio moved on from the franchise. It was a shoddy vision of things to come for the character…

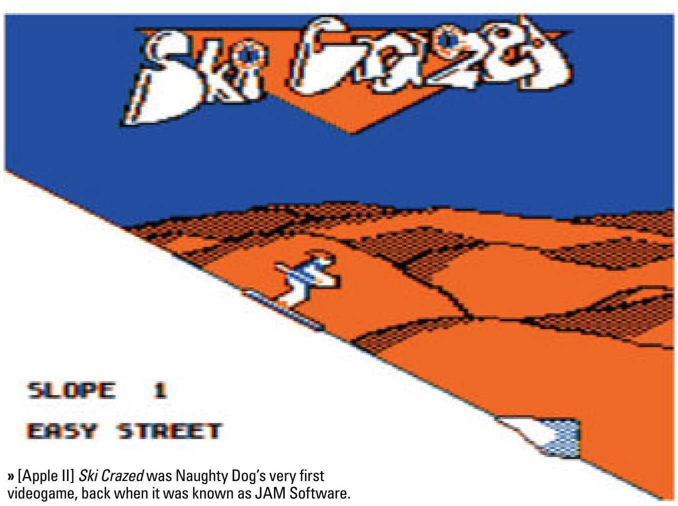
Andy and Jason sold their first published game, *Ski Crazed*, out of bags around Washington DC.

The duo spent $10,000 on renting floor space at E3 to market *Way Of The Warrior*. It paid off, as multiple publishers expressed an interest.



WAY OF THE WARRIOR

> **“Sega had Sonic and Nintendo Mario, but Sony? We hoped to jump into that slot”**
>
> ANDY GAVIN ON CRASH BANDICOOT BECOMING A MASCOT



» [Apple II] *Ski Crazed* was Naughty Dog’s very first videogame, back when it was known as JAM Software.

Remarkably, cold-calling an EA hotline led to their next gig, *Keef The Thief*, again for the Amiga and Apple II. “We just cold-called EA after *Dream Zone*. They asked for our games. We Fedexed them. They called back and offered us a deal! EA in those days was a lot of fun. Occasionally it was a hair bureaucratic, but Trip Hawkins was a very charismatic leader and an extremely fair guy. The whole company had an open and welcoming California feel.”

EA was pleased with the success of *Keef The Thief*, landing the duo a deal for it to publish *Rings Of Power* on the Mega Drive. At this point, however, Andy and Jason were living in different parts of the country as they attended college, so it took three difficult years to get *Rings Of Power* to market. “A big problem with *Rings* was that it was designed as a PC RPG with an odd graphical gimmick (the three-quarter perspective) and then migrated to the Genesis. Really, we should have redone the graphics at that point as a tile-based scrolling world (like *Phantasy Star*). Plus, the sheer scope of the project and the lacklustre treatment from marketing left us a little burnt.” EA chose not to reprint *Rings Of Power*, which disappointed the pair, leading to a brief hiatus for the nascent studio.

Yet it was Trip Hawkins and the promise of the 3DO that reignited their interest. Trip approached the pair, who were given free dev kits, which led to the creation of their self-funded beat-’em-up *Way Of The Warrior*. “We changed our whole philosophy with *Way*. Instead of doing the game we most wanted to make, we looked for an intersection between cool, manageable and popular. Fighting games were really hot in 1992-4 and when we started, no one seemed to be doing them on the 3DO. It seemed a perfect match.

“*Way* was a blast to develop. Jason and I lived together in this shitty apartment and worked on it 18 hours a day – but we had a lot of fun. The campy nature of both the kung fu genre and our take on it made the whole thing hilarious. I think that shows in the finished product.”

This change in development philosophy governed the success of what followed for the studio. Universal Interactive published *Way Of The Warrior*, and the duo were ▶

then signed up by Universal in 1994 to produce games on its LA lot, under the guidance of Mark Cerny. "The Universal relationship was a complicated but critical step in our evolution," Andy says. "In 1994-5 they really brought a lot to the table, particularly in the personification of Mark Cerny and in making a minimalist and relatively supportive environment. We learned how to scale to more than two developers and how to take every element of the production seriously."

On their extended car journey to Los Angeles, Jason and Andy conceived the idea of a 3D character-driven action game, informally named 'Sonic's ass', where the player would view the protagonist from behind while manoeuvring through the environment. This was the basis for *Crash Bandicoot*'s creation. We ask Andy if he felt he and Jason had generated an idea that was ahead of its time. "Actually, yes. Even as an idea, it seemed to offer a solution to the 'how to do platforming in 3D' dilemma. In practice, there were *a lot* of details to work out." As relayed on Andy's website, Naughty Dog was worried about the player's depth perception, the potential for dizziness and camera quality. No precedent had really been set, here – yet Universal was as keen on the 'Sonic's ass' idea as Andy and Jason themselves. Plus, *Mario 64* didn't exist yet, either.

The choice of format was easy. In a hardware market burdened by big failures and fragmented efforts from Sega, Sony offered a fresher start with the PlayStation. "It was really the best choice. The hardware was better. Sony seemed organised and perhaps most importantly, didn't have a pre-existing 'mascot' character. Sega had Sonic and Nintendo Mario, but Sony? We hoped to jump into that slot."

Jason and Andy toyed with the idea of a character called Willie The Wombat before settling on a bandicoot. A Warner Bros animation influence hung over the art direction and style of *Crash Bandicoot*, and Mark Cerny employed talented cartoonist Charles Zembillas to do character designs for *Crash*'s cast (Zembillas also created Spyro The Dragon for Insomniac, based on the Universal lot with Naughty Dog).

Released just three months after *Super Mario 64* in 1996, *Crash Bandicoot* was a sales smash. "Fundamentally, *Crash* offered a number of things," Andy says, when we ask about the key to its massive success. "First of all, the character and his world are great, and totally approachable. You can understand him at a glance, and he is highly inclusive. His combination of goofy positivity is very endearing. The world was also very appealing and consistently designed. Second, the gameplay is very fast and furious – if a little hard in *Crash 1*. It has a measured pace and rewards perseverance. When you get on a roll, it's pretty damn satisfying."



» [PSone] In many ways, *Crash Bandicoot* encapsulated the cooler, alternative tone set by PlayStation when it arrived on the market.

"I wouldn't call it a new engine, but we basically stripped out and rewrote every major system in the engine one by one"

ANDY GAVIN ON MAKING CRASH BANDICOOT 2



» [Mega Drive] *Rings Of Power* was a complex PC-style game brought to a home console.

Crash Bandicoot may have conceptually stemmed from the phrase 'Sonic's ass', but Naughty Dog's character became an icon in his own right just as the blue hedgehog's best days were ending. While *Mario 64* became a milestone of action adventure games set in a 3D space, *Crash* offered an edgier counterpoint, encapsulating the cooler attitude that made the original PlayStation such a massive cultural event. There was something fresher in *Crash* and, like the Warner characters it was inspired by, you got the sense that its creators were speaking as much to adults as they were to kids. Naughty Dog had signed a three-game deal with Universal in



TIMELINE

1982 ANDY GAVIN AND JASON RUBIN MEET AT SCHOOL AND BEGIN MAKING GAMES TOGETHER, AROUND THE AGE OF 12.

1985 AS JAM SOFTWARE, ANDY AND JASON'S FIRST TITLE, *SKI CRAZED*, IS RELEASED THROUGH BAUDVILLE ON THE APPLE II.

1994 NAUGHTY DOG BEGINS WORK ON THE *CRASH BANDICOOT* SERIES AT UNIVERSAL, AFTER SUCCESSFULLY RELEASING *WAY OF THE WARRIOR* FOR THE 3DO.

1999 THE DEVELOPER LEAVES THE UNIVERSAL LOT AND SETS UP SHOP IN SANTA MONICA, AFTER ITS THREE-GAME DEAL WITH THE COMPANY HAS ENDED.

2001 NAUGHTY DOG IS SOLD TO SONY AS *JAK & DAXTER* BECOMES A SMASH HIT ON THE STILL RELATIVELY NEW PS2 PLATFORM.

2007 NAUGHTY DOG RELEASES ITS FIRST PS3 TITLE, *UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE*, WHICH IS PRETTY MUCH THE ONLY DECENT TITLE ON THE CONSOLE AT THE TIME, LEADING TO MASSIVE SUCCESS FOR THE DEVELOPER.

2009 *UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES* IS RELEASED TO MONUMENTAL CRITICAL ACCLAIM, AND RIGHTFULLY SO – IT'S A PERFECTLY PACED ACTION EXPERIENCE WITH THE BEST TRAIN-RELATED SET PIECE EVER.

2011 *THE LAST OF US* IS UNVEILED AS NAUGHTY DOG BECOMES A TWO-GAME DEVELOPER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY, CREATING A NEW IP FOR THE PS3 WHILE CONCURRENTLY WORKING ON THE *UNCHARTED* SERIES.





» Andy Gavin poses with one of his most famous creations, Crash Bandicoot.



» [PSone] *Crash Team Racing* was a sharp alternative to *Mario Kart* on PlayStation, with a nicely structured adventure mode.

1994, covering the next two releases: *Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back* in 1997 and *Crash Bandicoot: Warped* in 1998.

Another unusual part of *Crash Bandicoot*'s commercial performance was its extraordinary sales in Japan, which were unusual for a Western-developed title. It truly was an international phenomenon – and the duo's confidence paid off. "We hoped for it, but I was still surprised it actually happened," Andy reflects on the success. "Enormously pleased though."

"We each had to step into the role of mentoring and advising an ever growing crew of developers," Andy explains about how his and Jason's roles changed as the studio expanded. "Fortunately, we hired really talented people so we also learned a lot from them, but we had to do a lot more producing and managing. On a technical level, Dave and I (the *Crash 1* programmers) combined some of our MIT engineering rigour with game practicality to do some really ambitious engineering on the level with other great (even non-game) software companies. This gave our games a leg up that, when combined with great design and awesome graphics, made them really stand out. A one-two-three punch."

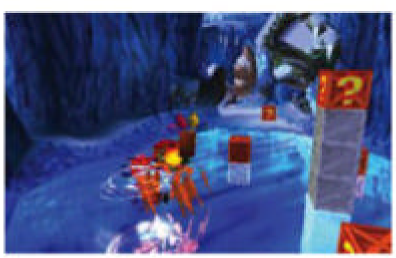
The subsequent titles performed equally well thanks to this combination of qualities and allowed the Naughty Dog team to push the PlayStation hardware's visual capabilities further. "I wouldn't call it a new engine, but we basically stripped out and rewrote every major system in the engine one by one," explains Andy, when we ask him to discuss *Crash*'s first sequel. "*Crash 2* shares the same architecture, but everything was overhauled and improved!"

The series won more plaudits over the next two instalments, with critics praising the more varied level design, increased fidelity of the animation and the ambition that demonstrated healthy signs of Naughty Dog's maturity as a studio. "*Crash 3* wasn't so much a technical risk like *Crash 2*, it was just a death sprint. We did the whole game in nine months and built *so much* content. The engine itself got a few upgrades, particularly the tech for various kinds of water and the flying, but mostly it was levels, levels, levels and more levels!"

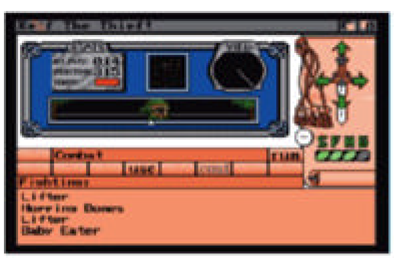
By this point, Sony was funding and publishing the *Crash* titles, and the two co-founders questioned the worth of Universal Interactive's input. As a result of choosing not to renew the latter's publishing deal, Naughty Dog apparently had to make *Crash 3* in the corridors at Universal. For its final *Crash* title, the high-quality karting spin-off *Crash Team Racing*, Sony negotiated the rights to use the licence since Naughty Dog was no longer on brilliant terms with its previous publisher.

"Mark Cerny was there the entire time we worked with them and we had a great relationship with him," recalls Andy. ▶





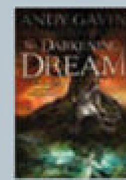
» [PSone] *Crash Bandicoot 2* started to have some real fun with the variety in level design.

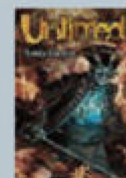


» [Amiga] A call to the Electronic Arts hotline led to *Keef The Thief*. *Rings Of Power* eventually followed.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Andy Gavin





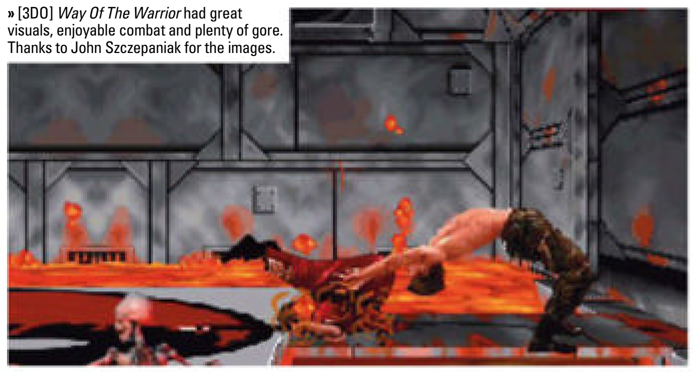
Andy co-founded the company Flektor with Jason Rubin after leaving Naughty Dog, creating a web program that allowed for easy online content mash-ups that quickly grew after its 2007 launch. The duo sold it to Fox in 2009 for north of $20 million, just as the latter was attempting to move into social media territory with MySpace. Andy and Jason left soon after. Since then, Andy has written two paranormal fantasy novels, *Untimed* and *The Darkening Dream*, and blogs extensively about a variety of topics at **www.all-things-andy-gavin.com**, where he often answers questions about the series he's worked on. He also does some rather entertaining write-ups of episodes of *Game Of Thrones* and documents his memories of working at Naughty Dog, with contributions from co-founder Jason Rubin.

Jason Rubin



Working on Flektor with Andy, Jason Rubin also ventured into comic book writing, creating *The Iron Saint* and *Mysterious Ways* through his company MORGANrose, published by Aspen Comics and Top Cow respectively. He also co-owned a mobile games studio with Andy known as Monkey Gods, which Jason described as an 'experiment'. Jason also recently became president of THQ, which, despite his best efforts to save the company, went bankrupt and had its assets sold off earlier this year. His main focus as president was focusing on stronger core titles, and it seemed like the company wasn't too far off a turnaround, though a few poor releases prior to his leadership left THQ with a lot of financial shortcomings. Anecdotally, we've heard positive things about Jason's leadership at the now-defunct publisher.

» [3DO] *Way Of The Warrior* had great visuals, enjoyable combat and plenty of gore. Thanks to John Szczepaniak for the images.



» [PS2] *Jak And Daxter* eliminated loading times from its gigantic overworld, which few other PS2 games could match.

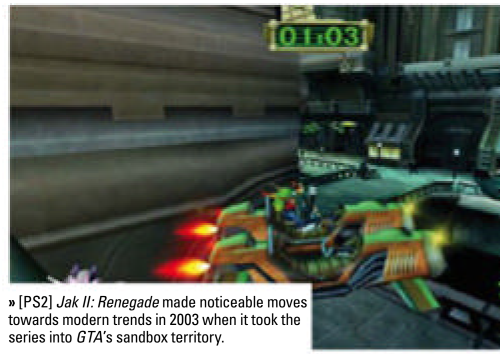




» [PS3] The *Uncharted* series has been a massive success for both Sony and Naughty Dog. We're still hoping for a fourth PS3 adventure.



» [PS3] The *Jak And Daxter* series was recently rereleased on Sony's PlayStation 3 in a new HD collection. It's a pretty solid compilation.



» [PS2] *Jak II: Renegade* made noticeable moves towards modern trends in 2003 when it took the series into *GTA*'s sandbox territory.

"Our relationship with the 1997-1999 management was actually cordial, but we didn't always think they brought a lot to the table. Around the time we were separating, the whole management changed over there again (Jim Wilson came in) and we never really got to know that crew. The company did have a pretty flawed corporate culture, one that didn't always encourage fair play. They stopped paying us… we had to sue them (we eventually won everything)."

After Universal, Naughty Dog set up shop in Santa Monica, and by this point its relationship with Sony was exceptionally strong. Andy says that the developer's choice of hardware was more down to opportunity than any emotional ties – yet in 2000, after beginning work on their first non-*Crash* title in six years, Andy and Jason sold Naughty Dog to Sony, in a move motivated by the console maker's desire to own its next big intellectual property.

"We had a great relationship with Sony from 1996 on," Andy says. "By 2000 when we were discussing the merger, we were not only exclusive in practice but chummy with all levels of the company, from junior producers and QA managers to Kaz Hirai… It is/was a great company, with bright motivated people, a lot of energy, a determination to do things well, and an ethos of fairness and honesty. Companies are like people, and any that has a lot of these things going for it is a rarity."

Jason was confident that Naughty Dog could have functioned independently, but being absorbed by Sony allowed the team to focus on making games. The studio was one of the first to obtain a PS2 dev kit, though working with the new hardware didn't come easy, according to Andy. "The PS2 had a very steep learning curve. It was a great machine, but to milk all the power out of it you had to migrate a lot of code onto the vector units. It was vastly more complicated than the PSone. Naughty Dog was one of the few teams that thrived in those early PS2 days because the quality of our programmers and technical artists was so high. Lesser tech guys got dusted."



» [PS2] *Jak And Daxter* soon turned into a trilogy for PlayStation 2 owners.

The team's new title, 2001's *Jak And Daxter*, marked an ambitious turn from the linear platforming of *Crash*. A Nintendo-inspired platform/adventure, it would feature a seamless open world with no loading screens, which caused numerous headaches for Andy and his team. "Oh, God. The seamless loading was hard. We had been heading in this direction with *Crash*, which featured a very sophisticated streaming system and extremely short load times (3-4 seconds!), but with *Jak And Daxter* we had this early mandate to eliminate loading entirely. It was hard, but very cool in a subtle way. Very few games do it even now."

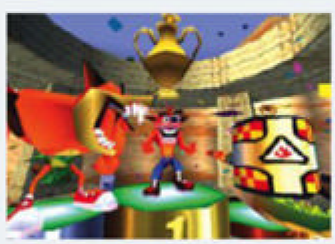
The Nintendo pastiche was deliberate, too. "There was a lot of *Mario 64* / *Banjo* influence in *Jak 1*, as they were the most modern (and best) examples of platforming during the 1999-2000 period when *Jak* was under design."

Jak was another huge hit on PS2, if not quite as commercially gargantuan as *Crash*, and once again gave the PlayStation brand

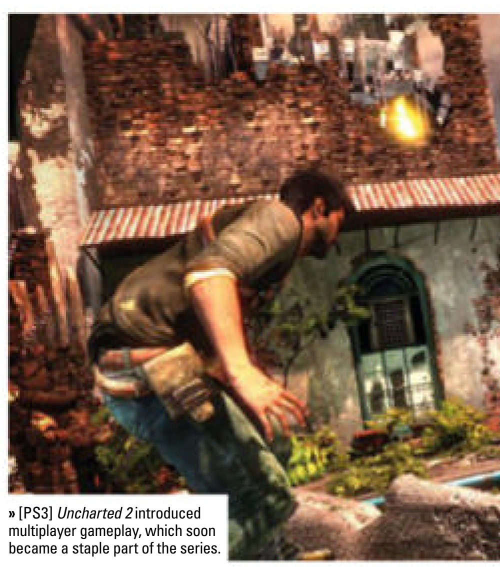
"Focus on characters, trifecta of art, gameplay and technology, and massive polish and attention to detail"

ANDY GAVIN ON NAUGHTY DOG'S DESIGN PHILOSOPHIES

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CRASH BANDICOOT?



Owned by Activision now after it merged with Vivendi several years ago, Crash Bandicoot is MIA while his former stablemate Spyro the Dragon is part of the plastic-shifting phenomenon that is Skylanders. "He isn't really anywhere, which is sad, as Crash is a great character," reflects Andy on Crash's current status. That special quality that defined Naughty Dog's *Crash* titles was lost in the first multiplatform release, *The Wrath of Cortex*, in 2001, which mostly rehashed the ideas of previous *Crash* titles. It was published during the same holiday period as *Jak And Daxter*, and naturally it didn't compare too well. From there, the *Crash* series got progressively worse, though the last instalment, *Crash Of The Titans*, wasn't completely awful. The magic's just been lost a little bit from the series – there's never been a drive to innovate or push the 3D platforming genre forward with *Crash* outside of Naughty Dog's hands, which defined the original games' success.



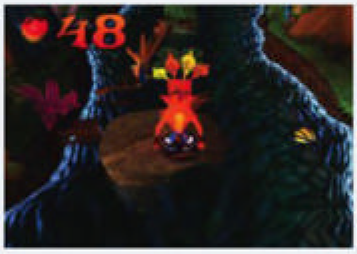
» [PS3] *Uncharted 2* introduced multiplayer gameplay, which soon became a staple part of the series.

DEFINING GAMES



Way Of The Warrior

As a viable *Mortal Kombat* alternative on the struggling 3DO, *Way Of The Warrior* was arguably the best known of Naughty Dog's pre-*Crash* titles, with a sense of irony that its contemporaries lacked. This marked the start of the studio's relationship with Universal, which turned out to be extremely fruitful. *Way Of The Warrior* is notable for its gory visuals, diverse characters (portrayed by friends and relatives of the staff) and impressive combo attacks. It features a particularly aggressive soundtrack too, with many of the tracks coming from White Zombie's album *Le Sexorcisto: Devil Music, Vol 1.*



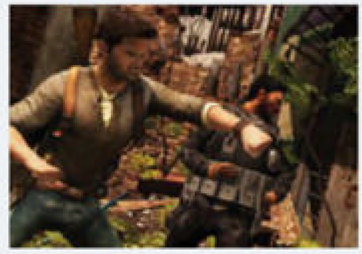
Crash Bandicoot

Arriving on a console without a mascot, *Crash Bandicoot* posited its own solution for the 3D platformer genre that contrasted strongly with Nintendo's ideas in *Mario 64* – Crash was an icon with the complete package from the start, with strong character designs and instantly gratifying platforming mechanics in a game packed with smart level design. *Crash Bandicoot* proved to be a watershed moment for Naughty Dog and, as *Sonic* had done with Sega's Mega Drive before it, helped convince gamers that Sony's new cool console was the machine to own. A superb evolution of the platform genre that everyone needs to play.



Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy

Bearing some resemblance to the *Crash* series in its feel, *Jak And Daxter* exchanged linear levels for a gigantic environment filled with 101 various challenges. *Banjo Kazooie*, *Zelda* and *Mario 64* all inspired its ambitious design, which illustrated Naughty Dog's ability to create a large, cohesive world to rival Nintendo's own properties. *Jak*'s persistent game world and near seamless loading times showed off Naughty Dog's technical prowess, while the clever pairing of the silent Jak and motormouth Daxter was a testament to the studio's keen eye for strong characterisation.



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

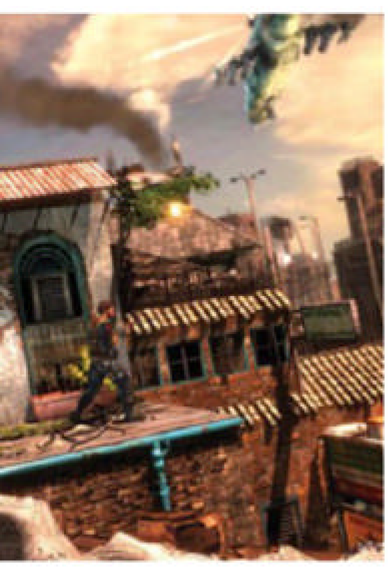
While *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* was a highly enjoyable PS3 debut, its ambitious sequel bettered it in every way. It built on the original game's *Indiana Jones* pastiche, setting players up with a gauntlet of ever-escalating set pieces and a rip-roaring tale, marking a new high in pacing for third-person action-adventure games. It's a highly engaging cinematic romp, and still looks incredibly cutting edge. It's also notable for introducing for bringing a slick multiplayer offering to the popular series. It remains Naughty Dog's best title to date, as well as a generation-defining release for the PlayStation 3.



» [PS3] *The Last Of Us* is looking like it's going to be the last must-play PlayStation 3 release. We can only imagine where Naughty Dog goes next.



» [PS3] If you crave great characters and cinematic action then Naughty Dog games should be your first port of call.



a mascot that it needed. The series moved into an open-world paradigm with 2003's *Jak II: Renegade*, which was clearly a product of its time in a post-*GTA III* world. "We wanted to show that we could go open world with the best of them!"

By the time the vehicle-centric *Jak 3*'s release came around in 2004, the co-founders' contracts were up, and Andy and Jason felt confident about leaving Naughty Dog in the hands of its veteran staff, headed up by Evan Wells and Christophe Balestra; their departure was as much about allowing these new leaders to develop as the desire to have a bit of time off for other projects. "Not only has Naughty Dog survived for 8.5 years since we left, but it has thrived and grown," Andy says. "Evan, Christophe and the whole team over there continue to show their enormous talent and dedication. The games are new, cutting edge and yet still very much Naughty Dog games. They draw from the same basic philosophical strategy we developed in the *Crash* era: focus on characters, trifecta of art, gameplay, and technology, and massive polish and attention to detail."

The *Uncharted* series does indeed embody those ideals and, particularly with its barnstorming second instalment released in 2009, shows how Naughty Dog's direction has weathered time effectively and allowed it to progress effectively as a studio. *The Last Of Us* is its latest release, a post-apocalyptic thriller that touches upon darker subject matter than we're used to seeing in the developer's releases, which again seems like a natural part of its evolution.

What's reassuring about Naughty Dog's enduring reputation, then, is that those principles outlined by Andy and Jason, back when they made *Way Of The Warrior*, have survived until today – Naughty Dog creates big, fun games with a credible mass appeal, a balance that few developers can equal with any great conviction. Yet it stemmed from two confident friends teaching each other how to make games, and a mutual loyalty leading to unexpected levels of hard-earned success.

"They feature big integrated worlds, gameplay-first storytelling and all the above stuff," says Andy, discussing what defines a modern Naughty Dog game. "That's what makes them Naughty Dog games. Starting with *Jak 1* and moving into *Jak 2*, we really focused on trying to make the best 'story you play' possible. *Uncharted 2* and *3* take this to whole new levels. The 2004-2013 steps have been just as challenging as the 1994-2004 steps. Same dance, different moves."

Naughty Dog's *The Last Of Us* was recently released on PS3. Andy Gavin is the author of *The Darkening Dream* and *Untimed*. Find out more at the-darkening-dream.com and untimed-novel.com.

Minority Report

In this special edition of Minority Report, Mike Bevan decides to revisit a clutch of less well-known 3D games across several retro platforms, from Guardian on the Amiga CD32 to Elektra Glide on the Amstrad CPC 464. Are they still worthy of your attention? Read on to find out



» AMIGA CD32



»[Amiga CD32] As in *Defender*, everything is out to kill you from the start.

GUARDIAN

■ SYSTEM: AMIGA CD32 ■ DEVELOPER: ACID SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1994

■ **The original *Starwing* (or *Star Fox* as the rest of the world knows it) was a massive leap for 3D flight-oriented shoot-'em-ups that also made any gamer without a Super Nintendo extremely envious. The bright polygons and colour-graded horizons of the game evidently inspired New Zealand-based programmer Mark Sibley, whose working title for his homage-of-sorts *Guardian* was 'Sibwing'. However, despite the graphic similarities, *Guardian* isn't really a rehash of Fox McCloud's space epic; it's actually a beautifully observed 3D evolution of *Defender*, although this time around you are saving city skyscrapers rather than humanoids in distress.**

Your nimble little space fighter works similarly to *Defender*'s craft, relying on constant jabs of the forward thrust button, with an added reverse thrust control allowing fine-tuning for your speed. Dronoids, baddies that look like *Defender*'s Landers, are dropped off throughout the game by a giant *Independence Day*-style mothership, proceeding to pootle about, dropping bombs on your beloved buildings. It's up to you to stop them.

Of course it's not quite that simple. Other enemies constantly spawn into the game around you and, as with Eugene Jarvis's creation, like to get on your tail and fire lots of bullets at you. And here's where the game plays its trump card control-wise. You know that bit in *Defender* when your ship is being pursued by a mob of angry Mutants and you hit the reverse button, bringing your nose around to face them while continuing to skim backwards under the inertia of your craft? Then blam… you unleash a torrent of laser death, watch your enemies combust in a shower of pixels, then engage forward thrusters and continue on your merry way.

Well, *Guardian* channels this classy game mechanic in a nifty manoeuvre that *Amiga Power*'s Jonathan Davies dubbed "perhaps the single greatest feature of any Amiga game ever." If you have sufficient speed and notice laser fire from

» ATARI 800/XL

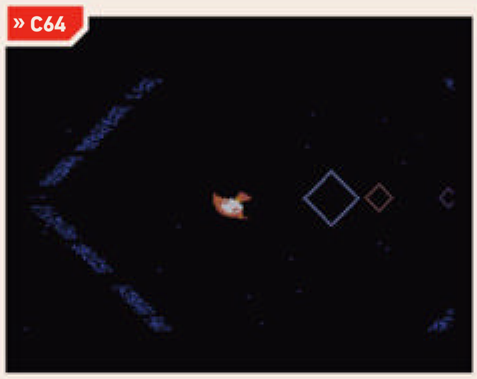


» ALTERNATE REALITY: THE CITY

■ SYSTEM: ATARI 800/XL
■ DEVELOPER: PARADISE PROGRAMMING ■ YEAR: 1985

■ **Released two years** before *Dungeon Master*, this real-time RPG was a technical marvel, cramming a whole texture-mapped city into a 48K Atari 800. The 3D engine pre-empts the one seen in *Wolfenstein 3D* seven years later, and players can wander around the maze-like environment encountering various characters, and entering shops and inns. The game featured a jaw-dropping opening sequence and some superb music. *The City* was the first instalment in a planned seven-game series, but that was abandoned after one sequel, *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon*.

» C64



» MASTER OF THE LAMPS

■ SYSTEM: C64
■ DEVELOPER: ACTIVISION ■ YEAR: 1985

■ ***Zzap!64* readers may** recall it getting a middling review, but this *Arabian Nights*-inspired offering possesses a hypnotic charm. Part 3D flying game, part *Simon*-style musical memory test, the evocative score by the late Russell Lieblich is quite wonderful and the effective tunnel sequence, as you guide your magic carpet-riding hero between bouts of note-duelling with an evil genie, still delivers the thrills. As diamond-shaped gates are flung from the centre of the screen across a starry sky, and the music crescendoes, you may well find yourself ducking your head left or right as you try to pass through each one.

» AMSTRAD CPC



» ELEKTRA GLIDE

■ SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC
■ DEVELOPER: ENGLISH SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1986

■ **Adam Billyard's futuristic** racer was a bit of a showcase for the graphic capabilities of the Atari home computers, but to placate our editor we're featuring the Amstrad version. *Elektra Glide* is the Speedy Gonzalez of 8-bit racing games, with an undulating track that winds through tunnels and throws geometric obstacles at you at a ridiculous pace. Every now and then a jet flies overhead to drop cylinders, causing you to zigzag erratically to avoid them. The Amstrad port appears to lack some of the Atari's tunnel sections and is occasionally a bit on the choppy side, but it certainly does the job.



»[Amiga CD32] The grey thing is a building. Try not to shoot or crash into it.



»[Amiga CD32] The tracking missile seeks out and destroys the nearest Dronoid.



» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- The CD32 was the first 32-bit CD-ROM based videogame console to be released in Europe, Australia and Canada.
- The machine's specifications are very similar to the Amiga 1200 home computer, and many titles utilising the enhanced Amiga AGA architecture were ported to the machine.

your rear, a quick dab of the green button on the CD32 pad flips your ship 180 degrees to face your attacker, quickly allowing you to deal with him. And it's a great little touch, making the game much more dynamic and exciting, and side-stepping a common problem of 3D flying games – all that endless circling to get on the tail of your adversary. Perfecting the use of this tasty flying trick is one of those truly satisfying gaming experiences; in fact, you can get so good at it that you can actually make baddies collide with obstacles or each other as they try to keep up with you. And it keeps the game feeling like a fast-flowing and fluid arcade shooter, true to its roots. Indeed, like *Defender*, it does get insanely hard on higher levels, on some of which the mothership itself decides to ingest you, meaning that you have to fight your way out.

As CD32 games go, *Guardian* is as close to a 'must-have' as you can get. Although an Amiga 1200 version was later released, it was one of the only CD32 titles to be produced specifically for the console. The penultimate edition of *Amiga Power* named it the third best Amiga game ever (just behind *Gravity Power* and *Sensible World Of Soccer*) and declared that it was worth buying a CD32 just to play it. 17 years later, that's still very much the case.



»[Amiga CD32] The mothership descends periodically to drop off more city-bombing Dronoids.



» CONQUEROR

■ SYSTEM: ATARI ST (ALSO AMIGA)
■ DEVELOPER: RAINBOW ARTS ■ YEAR: 1990

■ **Originating on the** Acorn Archimedes, and using the patchwork-style landscape engine developed for David Braben's *Zarch*, *Conqueror* was a colourful WWII 3D tank combat-sim with an RTS slant. In addition to the 'solo' tank arcade mode, you can command a whole Allied or Axis battalion, directing or switching control to individual vehicles via a map screen, while the ability to send up spotter planes or call in air strikes boosts your arsenal of abilities. Tank driving has a definite *Battlezone*-feel and the complexity of the control system can be countered by getting a friend to control your gun turret.



» STUNT RACER 2000

■ SYSTEM: ACORN ARCHIMEDES
■ DEVELOPER: THE FOURTH DIMENSION ■ YEAR: 1993

■ **From the same** stable as *Space Fighter 3000*, this entertaining 3D driving sim was a sort of cross between *Hard Drivin'* and *Stunt Car Racer*. And where Geoff Crammond's game kept you firmly on a single rollercoaster track, *Stunt Racer 2000* let you roam freely across an undulating arena of suspended raceways, jumps, bridges and death-defying loops. Its sandbox elements predate similar modern games by decades. Most fun is a two-player split-screen mode where a pair of drivers can orchestrate all manner of spectacular mid-air near misses, or attempt to wreck each other, then relive the carnage via the built-in replay facility.



» DARXIDE

■ SYSTEM: SEGA 32X
■ DEVELOPER: FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **All but overlooked** towards the end of the 32X's life, *Darxide* was a texture-mapped space shooter that played like a 3D version of *Asteroids*. It's an impressive-looking game considering the limitations of the hardware, although the lack of an on-screen cross-hair makes the task of shattering space debris and targeting enemies tricky. Sadly, the fact that it was released only in Europe in tiny quantities means that copies command an astronomical price tag, although Frontier Developments did release an updated version, *Darxide EMP*, for Pocket PCs and Nokia S60 mobile phones in 2003.



AS MYST TURNS 20, CO-CREATOR ROBYN MILLER SPEAKS TO CRAIG RITCHIE ABOUT A SIMPLE FLICK-SCREEN ADVENTURE THAT WOULD GO ON TO BECOME ONE OF THE BESTSELLING VIDEOGAME SERIES OF ALL TIME

By now it is well known that *Myst* was, at the time, the most successful game ever. But it was a divisive game from the start: very few gamers were sitting on the fence about this title, and it was often a love-it-or-hate-it affair. Twitch-gaming *Wolfenstein* and *Doom* fans were not interested in this slow-paced adventure, while millions more became lifelong fans.

Most **Retro Gamer** readers will be familiar with the background: *Myst* was a surreal first-person adventure that took the Mac and PC worlds by storm in 1993, helping (along with the likes of *Star Wars: Rebel Assault* and *The 7th Guest*) to usher in the CD-ROM era of home computer gaming. It presented players with devilish puzzles taking place in dreamlike locations brought to life through then-astonishing pre-rendered graphics, a technique just taking off and never before put to use in this way. Through a combination of flick-screen static locations, embedded QuickTime videos and subtle ambient sound effects with a minimalist soundtrack, Robyn and Rand Miller (and their company Cyan) put together one of the most fantastically realised environments the gaming world had ever seen.

Players start off on Myst Island, having been teleported there by a magical link book, a staple for the series. Presented with very little background to work with, they take the role of 'The Stranger', seemingly alone in an otherworldly place of strange locations and often bizarre juxtapositions. "There's a magic on Myst Island because of all the disparate elements pulled together in one place," says Robyn Miller. "Logically speaking, it doesn't necessarily work quite as well, but still it's really interesting and fun. There's *no reason* why there's a retro spaceship or a clock tower out in the water… these things are just fun."

This strangeness was born of a marrying of imagination and experimentation, the brothers simply doing whatever they wanted to make an interesting setting for their game. First and foremost came the visuals, with plot and story more an afterthought. "We didn't have a back story and I think that's why we built some of the stuff like that," remembers Robyn. "We had no idea who the characters were and we didn't really know where any of the stuff came from, and just created all of those visuals without any idea why!"

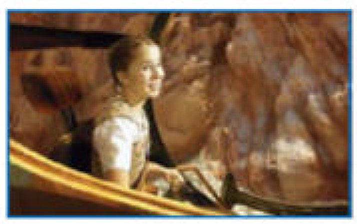
The adventure takes place on a variety of islands, known as Ages, with players discovering two brothers apparently imprisoned in books, and setting out on a quest to free them. As the plot unfolds, the brothers' father Atrus, encountered briefly near the beginning of the game, also comes in to play and presents one of multiple endings to the story.

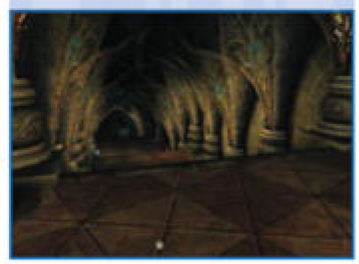
"We realised that simply choosing one brother or the other would not make for much of an ending," recalls Robyn. "It just wouldn't have been enough. We wanted this extra tier to the story where you as a player needed to have something additional so that you feel that you're accomplishing something beyond simply deciding 'oh well this brother is the bad guy, I'm going to choose this guy'. So we added Atrus so that you are actually figuring something out beyond just choosing one of these two brothers."

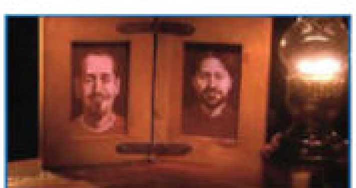




» [PC] *Myst IV* has a decidedly steampunk feel to it.







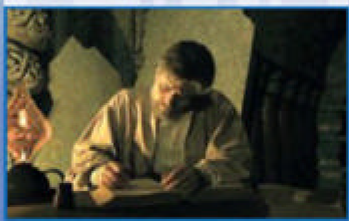
» [PC] In-game cameos of Robyn and Rand as Sirrus and Achenar.

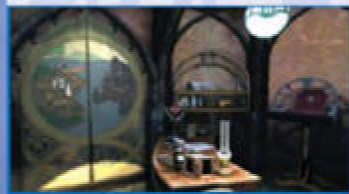
With the game completed, Cyan benefited greatly from their relationship with Brøderbund, with the company becoming *Myst*'s publisher. Robyn attributes part of *Myst*'s success to Brøderbund's marketing efforts and connections in the PR realm, giving the game exposure that Cyan would otherwise never have had. "They were also a big distribution company," he adds, "and were able to get the game out there on a level we never could. Plus we liked working with them. They were a big company, but small enough that we could relate to them still."

The visual and technical achievements of the game, plus Brøderbund's marketing efforts and the rise in CD-ROM use, saw *Myst* go on to sell more than six million copies. It was the bestselling game the world had yet seen, and would remain so for close on a decade before being surpassed by *The Sims*. And with such massive success, a sequel was inevitable. Enter *Riven*.

As would become standard for the series, the player once again has to help Atrus – this time to seek out his beloved Catherine. The poor woman is being held captive by Atrus's father, Gehn, in more family-themed shenanigans not too dissimilar to the first title. Players find themselves having to free not only Catherine but also the people of Riven, as Gehn has imposed despotic rule over the land. And The Stranger has to set it all right, armed only with a book – another series mainstay.

It's noteworthy that before even experiencing the full extent of the graphical and technical improvements *Riven* brought, players were met with





ROBYN ON MYSTICAL MUSIC

"We originally were not going to put music in – we were just going to have sounds in the environment. But our publisher, Brøderbund, said 'do you want to try music in the world?' and we didn't really want to do that. We added some soundtrack pieces to Myst Island to test it out and sort of also to prove our publisher wrong, and it actually was really cool! It ended up not proving them wrong [laughs]. My favourite music I did on the entire game was on the Mechanical Age. I really enjoyed the music there. It was really interesting because music really transformed the environment, and it was really fun writing the music, placing it into the game and seeing the transformation take place."



» [PC] Despite vastly improved graphics and movement, *Myst V* just didn't feel 'Myst' enough for some fans.

much more story and character motivation than had been present in the first game. Indeed, the brothers had been hard at work building depth to their world, and working on storytelling as a whole.

"When we created the original *Myst*, we didn't have any of the myth or history behind [it]," says Robyn. "I could pretend that we had all this background written up, but we didn't have any of it! [He laughs.] A lot of it was just improvised, and we just wanted to create something really cool that felt interesting. Then after we created *Myst*, we created a history for it. We thought 'let's create back story and let's create a novel, and a second part to the game', and that's when we realised we needed more to it. We did the background of the first novel as we were creating *Riven* and it was one of those things where you're doing two things at once and barely have time enough to do everything. After that, all we had time for was working on the production of *Riven*."

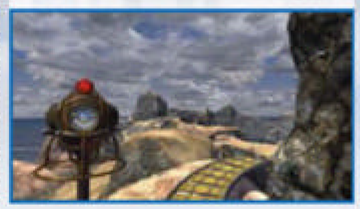
Riven's gameplay built on everything that made the original popular, improved even more so by the added history and back story giving their world depth. This was more *Myst* goodness, executed brilliantly thanks to an unrushed four years – and millions of production dollars – in the making. By *Riven*'s release in 1997, the world of FMV was in full swing with the likes of the *Wing Commander* series and Sierra's second *Gabriel Knight* adventure featuring professional actors and multimillion-dollar budgets. *Myst*'s mammoth sequel fell into the same camp, with a more than $10 million combined spend on development and marketing.



When it was released, *Riven* came on five CDs housing a massive adventure that showed vastly improved visuals with much smoother (and larger) embedded videos. The high-quality rendered backgrounds and superior FMV resulted in *Riven* being one of the most visually splendid computer games ever seen, and playing it today it's a wonder that Cyan managed to fit so much detail into only 640x480 screens. The audio and music were outstanding as well. As with *Myst*, Robyn Miller composed the soundtrack, which further added to the captivating experience. *Riven* was another commercial success, being the bestselling game in its year of release and going on to sell over 4.5 million copies itself.

The ending of *Riven* and the seeming conclusion to The Stranger's story could have wrapped up the *Myst* legacy then and there – and for Robyn it did, as he left the company soon after to pursue other interests.

"There were a few reasons that I decided to leave," he says. "Rand and I had different ideas of what the company should be, and part of that was to do with *Myst*. For one thing, I felt that *Riven* was the end of the story, and Rand wanted that story to continue. And I think there was also a broader philosophical difference with where we wanted to go with the business. I wanted to go off and do other things and I think Rand wanted to stay with that. I was also anxious and eager to try some more linear types of storytelling, like film."

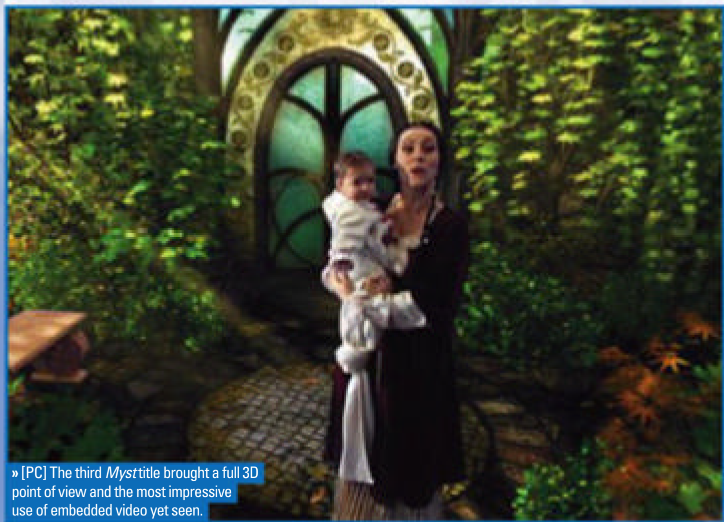




Given that one of the minds behind *Myst* and *Riven* had now left, the next game came from a much different creative source. Due to their success with *The Journeyman Project*, a first-person adventure with many similar stylings and techniques to Cyan's games, California-based Presto Studios were a fitting team to take the series' legacy forwards. Even Rand's involvement in the production was limited to only a consulting role as well as once again acting as Atrus, the latter of which he has since said he didn't find particularly enjoyable.

Myst III: Exile improved on the technology gamers had already seen in *Zork: Nemesis*, whereby players were allowed to freely move the mouse while videos were playing on screen. This series-first meant that we could look around a room or environment while characters were talking or moving nearby. While *Myst* had mostly static screens and *Riven* improved with smoother transitions and more animated elements, now for the first time players had the freedom to move their perspective by 360 degrees in each area they visited. It was another success, selling over a million in its first year, but was unable to come close to matching the sales of its predecessors. The gaming landscape had changed considerably and *Myst*'s ever-slow nature, in a world full of first-person shooters and PlayStation 2s, had become even more divisive than ever.

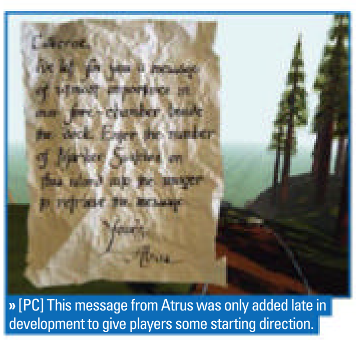
By *Myst IV: Revelation*, the series was a few sequels and a few leaps in technology away from the foundation that had been set up more than a decade before, and fans were presented with even more of a departure from what they'd known in *Myst* or *Riven*. Things opened up with a very steampunk feel in the fourth game, a slightly different albeit not unwelcome atmosphere to the earlier titles. Atrus has once again calls on The Stranger to help him with his family affairs, this time the potential release of his two imprisoned sons. It was more



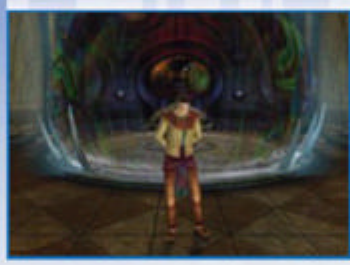
» [PC] The third *Myst* title brought a full 3D point of view and the most impressive use of embedded video yet seen.

of the same, and from the outset it's our opinion that a certain something from the originals was lost – a view shared by Robyn.

"I'm torn," he says. "I'm torn about the later games in that in one way I'm glad that they exist because there's a lot of people that really like them, and I don't want to disregard that love that people have for the games. I mean, there's even an open source multiplayer game and people love it, and I think that's great. It's just that for me personally, as one of the creators of that world, I had a vision for what it was. You have a vision and you want it to be something, and when you see it turn into something else it makes it hard for you to go back and see it as something you never envisioned. That's not to say it's a bad thing – it can even be a good thing. It can even be *better* than what you envisioned! But still, it can be difficult to watch it turn into that other entity because you have this original idea. For me, it started with *Myst*, there's a story that connects the two and then it ends with *Riven*. The chronicle all comes together there and ends. That's not to say I was closed to any other ideas or iterations, or that there would be a *Myst* film or anything like that – it was simply that for me that was it."



» [PC] This message from Atrus was only added late in development to give players some starting direction.



This trend of evolving the games culminated in *Myst V: End Of Ages*, which was an entirely different beast to the originals. While a great adventure game, *Myst V* has us feeling that it could have just as easily belonged to a completely different franchise – the 'Myst-ness' that had begun to wane by the fourth title was almost all missing now. Gone were pre-rendered backgrounds and embedded videos, replaced with real-time rendered 3D environments and characters. Add to this the shift away from screen-by-screen movement to FPS-like controls and exploration and we could easily have been playing any other first-person adventure game. Of course, there are throwbacks and characters that follow Atrus's family line from the earlier games, with the plot centring on his daughter, Yeesha, and a mystery surrounding an ancient tablet. But with just a handful of plot edits and character changes, this game could just as easily have been a later addition to, say, the *Zork* series, or a new IP entirely.

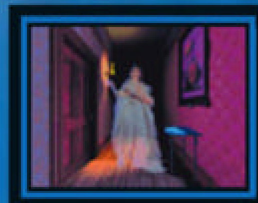
While Rand had stayed on and lent his involvement (and acting skills) to the later games, Robyn's only real experience of them was as a player of the finished products, and even so to a limited degree. "I've never played the other games for more than an hour and a half," he explains, "as it is hard for me to do that. I'll play the games and I'm thinking 'this isn't *Myst*'. Now once again, I'm not necessarily right – it's just as someone who created the thing and originally came up with the foundation, you look at the house that's built on the foundation and say 'no, no, no, that's not the house!' But there's no right or wrong. Someone else has built the house, and all these people love the house, so I've come to the conclusion that people like the other *Myst* games and that's a good thing. I'm happy… that that's been the ultimate outcome."

Regardless of where you stand, be it as a purist who believes that the soul of the series lies only in the first two titles, or as a die-hard fan of all five games as well as the *Uru* spin-offs, the *Myst* series has a firm place in the annals of gaming history and was even recently inducted into New York's Museum of Modern Art, an honour shared by only a few titles out of the thousands in this medium.

"I think one of the reasons it turned out good was because we really had a lot of fun making it," says Robyn. "I think when you have that much fun doing something, when you've really put your heart into it, for the most part people are going to respond to it well. I think that's what happened with *Myst*, and people really appreciated it. It's got a huge community behind it, and it is now so much bigger than Rand and I. And that's really cool. It's a rare, rare privilege."

FMV LEGACY

THE 7TH GUEST (1993)



A grandfather title to the FMV gaming line, *The 7th Guest* was released earlier the same year as *Myst* and *Star Wars: Rebel Assault*, and was also a groundbreaking, bestselling success. Sadly, two decades on, its age really does show. Still, it remains a must play for videogame historians.

TEX MURPHY – UNDER A KILLING MOON (1994)



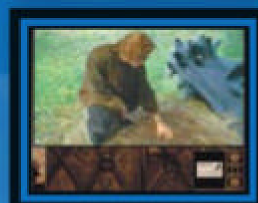
Access Software was big in using FMV, sampled audio and high-quality music, and for years was pushing the realism envelope by using pre-recorded video stills for its games' sprites. The *Tex Murphy* series took a leap forward with this solid FMV detective noir title, fun despite a now clunky UI.

PHANTASMAGORIA (1995)



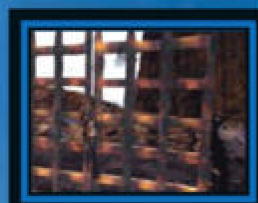
Get past the cringeworthy, God-awful acting in the almost unwatchable soft-porn intro video and you'll find that the game itself is fun, dark and truly gory in places. The audio is a major strong point, adding to the strong atmosphere of this adventure puzzler. A great example of FMV gaming.

GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN (1995)



FMV gaming seemed to sync more with the horror genre than anything else, and Sierra took its unique and very successful *Gabriel Knight* forward with this well-written, professionally produced adventure. Regardless of your take on FMV, this remains a deep and brilliantly constructed game.

ZORK NEMESIS 1996



While earlier games had also used actors and video technology, *Nemesis* incorporated FMV sequences with a pseudo-3D first-person camera that the player could rotate 360 degrees while stationary. It may not be a timeless classic, but it was definitely a technology landmark for the genre.

MYST
THE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY

ROBYN GIVES US THE LOWDOWN ON SOME OF MYST'S MOST MEMORABLE LOCATIONS

1 POOL



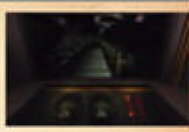
"We took our very small crew of people that included Chuck Carter and Chris Brandkamp through the game in a *Dungeons & Dragons* style, describing everything to them. We played the game through like this to test it, and when we did that we saw that they were writing things down and sketching things, so it was pretty obvious people would be taking notes. And that's why we included the blank notebook in the first versions of the game that were shipped."

2 MESSAGE IMAGER



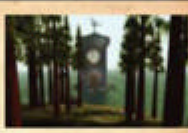
"That was Rand – all the parts in the entire game were played by Rand and me. I don't know what made us think we could do that! [He laughs]. Anyway, we put that imager in because we realised after designing and producing the whole game that people were playing and they didn't realise what they were meant to do. They started playing the game and didn't understand their goal. There was no hook! So after playtesting we added that imager and that whole room, and the note on the path as you walk up. It's the first thing you find and it basically says 'this is your goal'."

10 GENERATOR SWITCHES



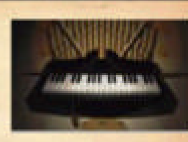
"I started building Myst Island – it was the first island I built – and I remember when I got to the generators and you flip the switches, I remember working on that and just thinking first of all the puzzle is so simple, but just visually that it really hit the mark and I felt that the game had something that was very different… I was extremely pleased from the cave going on down to the little room at the bottom with these big generators and it just felt like it had a mood that was extremely unusual and really was a cool place, and a cool time for me."

9 THE CLOCK TOWER



"When we very first designed *Myst*, we had no or very little back story. So much of visual design was based on intuition. 'Let's put the clock tower out in the water!' The idea of it sitting out there [was] enticing… We made decisions that way, without a lot of second guessing. There were also puzzle considerations: we wanted the clock tower to be inaccessible until the player had accomplished other tasks, so a separation by water worked well. And then, why a clock? This was part of the puzzle that leads the player to the Mechanical Age…"

4 PIANO KEYBOARD



"The age that you go to, the Selenic Age, is all based on audio, on sound. So we decided that to get there you had to complete an audio puzzle. And as far as the puzzle itself is concerned, it's just a matter of there being people for whom this is really simple, and they just pluck out the sounds, and then there are some people for whom this was just really hard. We enjoyed it – Rand and I really liked that one because we both play instruments, and it's just really pleasing to find this melody you have to play to solve the puzzle."

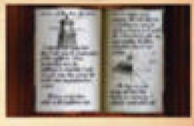


6 THE GIANT GEARS



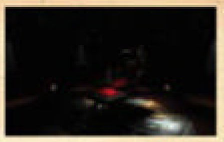
"The linking book that links us to the Mechanical Age is hidden within these big gears. But what inspired them? Hmm. I'd really love to tell you a wonderful story about how those gears found their way into the game, but I think it's probably something incredibly boring… like I just drew them."

5 LIBRARY



"We really, for a long time, tried to come up with an idea for what would be the thing that takes you to some other place. We knew it was going to have some magical element and that was going to be the one thing in *Myst* that would be the magical linking element. We thought of all kinds of things, and I think we were directly or indirectly inspired by *Chronicles Of Narnia*, where they fall through the picture. We wanted it to feel like that – that you have the opportunity to do something like that. It's the idea that books take you to other places."

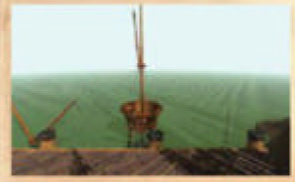
8 THE PLANETARIUM



"The planetarium is part of the puzzle that takes the player to Stoneship, a nautically inspired age. So the planetarium was our attempt to design the puzzle with a nautical flavour. But instead of finding your way around at sea using the night sky, you find your way to another age using the virtual sky of a planetarium – using astrological signs. I'm not sure what inspired this. The boat came first, I'm fairly certain of that, and then we worked backwards, thinking 'how do navigate through this kind of world?' The only other thing I have to say is that I purposefully wanted to make the chair a little frightening. Like a dentist's chair. I knew people would sit in it, but I wanted to give people the opportunity to question whether or not they should, which is really what *Myst* is all about."

7 THE SUNKEN SHIP

"I could talk about the building of the ship, but I think that's just boring. The ship here is the same as the one in the Stoneship Age. I copied them. The same ship is also copied to the fountain in front of the library."



3 RETRO ROCKET



"If we started over from the beginning, we would never have built that rocket. In the beginning, when we created *Myst*, we were just having fun and I don't think we were aesthetically trying to make sense out of anything. It was more surreal, and we were just choosing from this, and from this, and from that – 'Okay, a retro rocket? Yes, let's do that! And a giant tree here, a clock tower out in the water…' Nothing made much sense. It wasn't like everything fit, and if you compare *Myst* to *Riven* we got a lot more serious and tried to create a visual language for the world, but we just didn't do that for *Myst*."

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



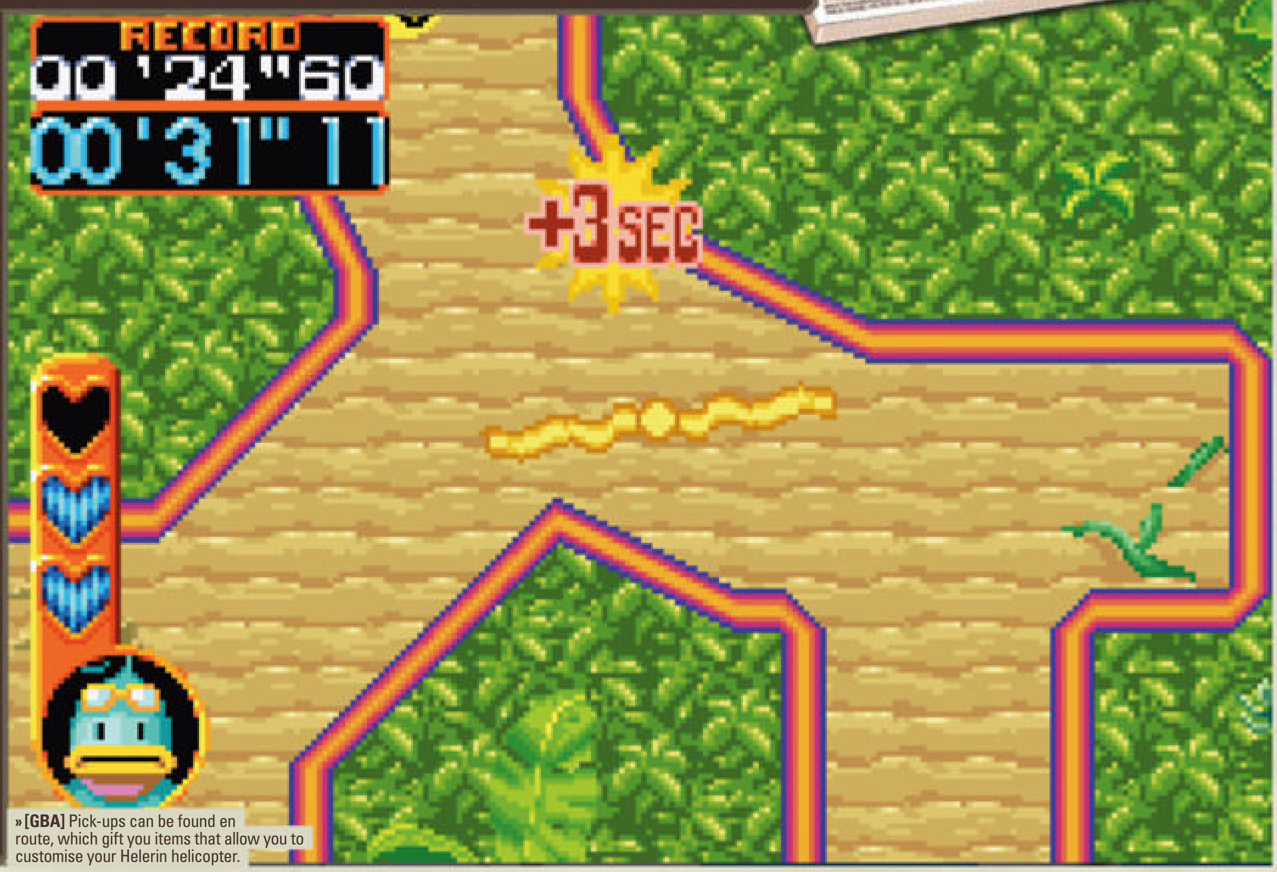
INFO

- **Featured System:** Game Boy Advance
- **Year:** 2001
- **Publisher:** Nintendo
- **Developer:** Eighting
- **Key People:** Atsuhiro Motoyama (composer), Yuichi Tomaya (planning manager)

GO DEEPER

- **Eighting was founded in 1995 by former Toaplan staff. The studio goes by the aliases 8ing and Raizing.**
- **Though *Kuru Kuru Kururin* wasn't released in North America, the GBA has no region lockout, meaning that Japanese and Europe carts are compatible with US devices.**

39.



» **[GBA]** Pick-ups can be found en route, which gift you items that allow you to customise your Helerin helicopter.

KURU KURU KURURIN

One of the GBA's best-ever puzzle games, Kuru Kuru Kururin is a wonderfully addictive exercise to test your nerves and dexterity. Stuart Hunt takes it for a spin…

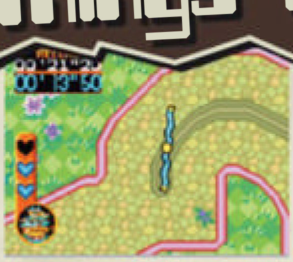
THE BACKGROUND

Kuru Kuru Kururin debuted on Nintendo's Game Boy Advance and was a launch game for the console both in Japan and Europe. It's loosely based on a funfair-style game of skill featured in Japanese TV game show *Ucchan Nanchan no Honou no Challenger*. The original game involved hapless contestants navigating a large metal stick through a series of awkwardly designed wire mazes and having to prevent it from coming in contact with their barriers to avoid an electric shock. Quite why it's never made the transition overseas we'll never know.

Interestingly, *Kuru Kuru Kururin* wasn't the first time that this popular TV game show was adapted into a videogame – perhaps the most widely known example being the earlier *Irritating Maze/Stick* – but it's certainly the best example. It's also proved to have the most longevity, spawning two sequels (although they were both released only in Japan). Its creator, Eighting, is a studio that's far better known for producing shooters and fighting games, with previous works including the *Bloody Roar* series and popular arcade shooters such as the excellent *Battle Garegga*, *Kingdom Grand Prix* and the marvellous *Terra Diver*. Still going strong today, its more recent projects include *Tatsunoko Vs Capcom Ultimate All-Stars*, *Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate* and *Marvel Vs Capcom: Fate Of Two Worlds* for Capcom.

Kuru Kuru Kururin therefore sticks out like a spinning, duck-piloted glow stick against the studio's hardcore gaming back catalogue – or rather it would do if it hadn't fallen under the radars of so many Western gamers, possibly because they were put off by its simplistic visuals and craved something with a bit more power to it. While the franchise failed to carve itself a global following (it wasn't actually released in the US), the series can be seen as a wonderful dalliance with the puzzle genre for Eighting, one that makes us wish the studio had experimented inside it a bit more. We'll happily accept this one experiment, however.

Things of note







Shocking Stuff!

The stick-and-maze gameplay was inspired by a Japanese TV show where contestants had to guide a metal rod through a wire maze without hitting the sides.

Music Maestro

Kuru Kuru Kururin's music was written by Atsuhiro Motoyama, who wrote the scores for many of Eighting's games, including the *Altered Beast*-themed brawler *Bloody Roar.*

A change of scene

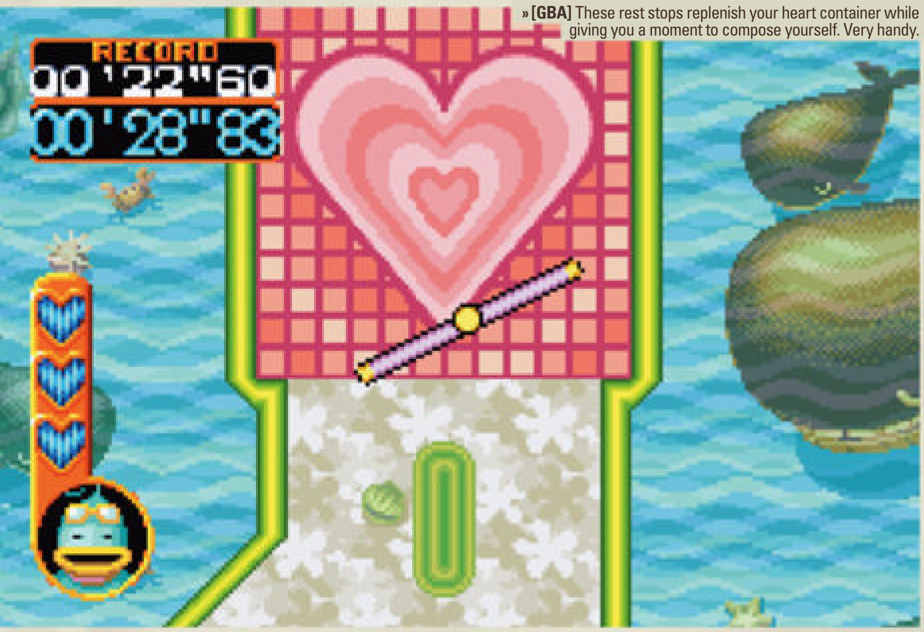
Kuru Kuru Kururin was developed by Eighting, a Japanese studio better known for producing solid fighting games and frenetic shoot-'em-ups than cutesy, colourful platformers.

The Kuru Kurus

Kuru Kuru was popular enough in Japan to spawn two sequels: *Kururin Paradise* on Game Boy Advance, and *Kururin Squash!* on GameCube. Both games were exclusives to the region.

Kuru Kameos

The *Super Smash Bros* series makes several references to *Kuru Kuru Kururin.* In one instance the Helerin can be summoned to act as a platform/wall during battles.



» **[GBA]** These rest stops replenish your heart container while giving you a moment to compose yourself. Very handy.



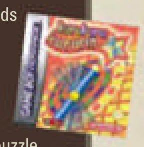
» [GBA] *Kuru Kuru Kururin* has a storyline of sorts, but it's thinner than a sucked wafer. Still, duck lovers will enjoy it.



» [GBA] Reaching the goal is tremendously satisfying, particularly as you reach the later levels of the game.

What the press thought

GameSpot
Score: 7.1
"The game works really well on Nintendo's new handheld, delivering a quick-moving puzzle game that is excellent at filling up small periods of free time.



Eurogamer
Score: 9
"There isn't another puzzle game available on the GBA at the moment that can rival *Kuru Kuru Kururin* for its sheer addictiveness and fun-value.

THE GAME

While games like *Irritating Stick* were pretty forgettable, *Kuru Kuru Kururin* takes the basic concept of getting something through a maze without it hitting anything and expands on it greatly. The most notable tweak it makes is that players are not guiding a static stick but a little duck inside a helicopter, dubbed a Helerin. It's a great idea, adding character to an otherwise dull inanimate object. Interestingly, Nintendo tried a similar approach with *Alleyway* on the Game Boy and stuck Mario in a spaceship cum paddle. It didn't work though, probably because *Alleyway* was a bit rubbish.

With *Kuru Kuru Kururin's* gameplay viewed from above the vehicle, you have the obvious headache of trying to deal with the movement of the chopper's rotor blades when passing through the winding tunnels and tight corners of the mazes, and naturally this adds a new layer to the gameplay.

In addition, players must also consider springs that are scattered around the mazes. If the Helerin hits a spring, its rotor blades will change from moving clockwise to anticlockwise, or vice versa. Using them soon becomes an essential part of success, though, as many require the blades to be spinning in a certain direction to give you enough room and time to edge through the gaps.

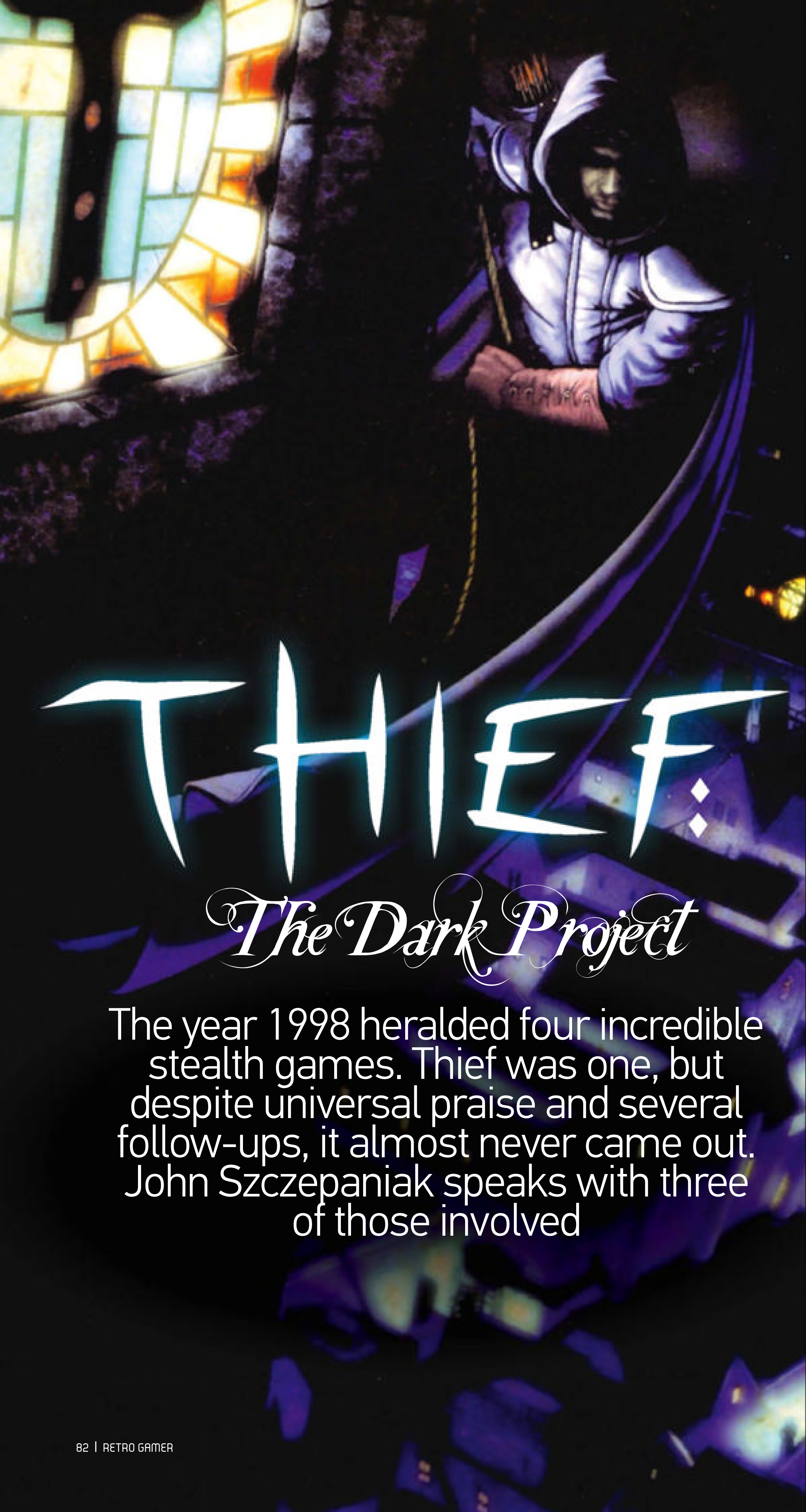
Thankfully though, while *Kuru Kuru Kururin* does get challenging when you hit its later stages, it does throw you a few lifelines. You have three lives with which to get the Helerin to the maze goal, with a life lost every time a barrier is hit. The stages also generally have at least one health replenish point, which stocks up your hearts and give your nerves a much needed break from the wracking the game continually gives them.

The controls are also sensibly mapped and make life easier. You control the Helerin using the D-pad and can increase its speed by pressing the A and B buttons – pressing them simultaneously makes it move even faster. *Kuru Kuru Kururin* also has a nice number of play modes and challenges that expand its longevity. The meat of the game is its Adventure mode, which kicks off by pitting players against five easy tutorial stages before unleashing them on 30 themed ones. And this is complemented by a Challenge mode, which adds a further 50 mini-stages to beat.

You can also pick up various accessories for your copter by rescuing birds, which are discovered by venturing off the beaten track and doing a bit of exploring. If all that wasn't enough, there's a great multiplayer mode that allows up to four players to link up their consoles and battle to complete the courses first. With lots of puzzles, a nice array of modes and plenty of stages to beat, *Kuru Kuru Kururin* is a cracking hidden gem for discerning puzzle fans.

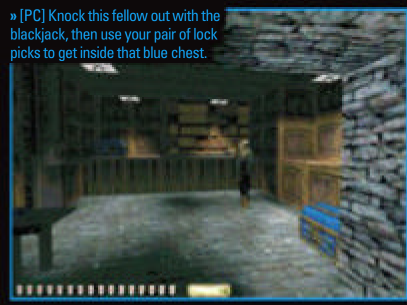
WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

To play *Kuru Kuru Kururin* is to fall in love with it. It's an excellent puzzler that won't fail to hook you from the outset thanks to its utterly brilliant concept. Its game world is bold, bright and colourful, its controls wonderfully simple and gameplay incredibly addictive. It has that 'one more go' feel in abundance, and the excellence of its gameplay comes from the satisfaction felt when you complete a stage. It's been a firm favourite in the **Retro Gamer** office for years, with regular competitions played over many a lunchtime. The real beauty of it is that often you find yourself struggling with a stage, but then all of a sudden everything just clicks into place and it becomes a doddle to complete. When this happens it becomes one of the most rewarding gaming experiences on GBA. If you're at all a fan of dexterity- and timing-based puzzle games, we urge you to give *Kuru Kuru Kururin* a spin (that terrible closing pun obviously intended).



THIEF: The Dark Project

The year 1998 heralded four incredible stealth games. Thief was one, but despite universal praise and several follow-ups, it almost never came out. John Szczepaniak speaks with three of those involved

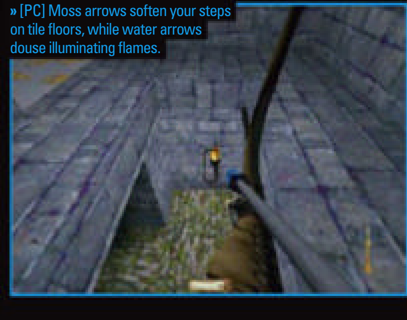


» [PC] Knock this fellow out with the blackjack, then use your pair of lock picks to get inside that blue chest.

Released in December 1998 at a cost of roughly $3 million, the original *Thief* was plagued by setbacks including name and concept changes, two near cancellations, the close bankruptcy of its developer, and mass walkouts that saw its producer, project director, lead programmer, renderer programmer and lead artist leave. An estimated 50+ people were involved in the project, including Ken Levine of *BioShock* fame and Warren Spector of *Deus Ex*.

One man who stayed the course was lead designer Tim Stellmach, part of the disbanded *Star Trek: Voyager* dev team which was absorbed into other Looking Glass projects. "*Voyager* was the first professional project of mine to fall entirely apart, and it left me with something to prove to myself on *Thief*," he tells us. "I think it was Jeff Yaus, who I'd worked with on *Terra Nova*, holding down the design duties. In any case, Jeff moved on to saner things around that time."

Despite its painful conception, *Thief* ended up as one of the finest and most enduring PC games. For a long time though, it was not as we now know it. The project officially started in the spring of 1996 as *Dark Camelot* – an inversion of the Arthurian legend, with an evil King Arthur, time-travelling Merlin and butch lesbian Guinevere. Prior to this, however, project starter Ken Levine had design documents for games like *School Of Wizards*, *Dark Elves Must Die* and a "communist zombie game" called *Better Red Than Undead*, all of which eventually metamorphosed into *Dark Camelot* and later *The Dark Project*. "I remember seeing most or all of those concept documents, and they were definitely more than just names,"



» [PC] Moss arrows soften your steps on tile floors, while water arrows douse illuminating flames.



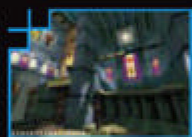
» [PC] You can pick NPC pockets while they're awake, or knock them out and loot the body.

continues Tim. "I think there was at least a short treatment written up on all of those: who the player was, the main themes and characters, highlights of the gameplay, that sort of thing."

Another member of the *Thief* design team was Randy Smith, just out of grad school. "The Looking Glass website had a teaser for *The Dark Project*, promising a rich world and stealth gameplay," he tells us. "I had a computer science degree with minors in psychology and media arts, but no experience. Looking Glass wasn't listing any openings, so I tracked down the project director, Greg LoPiccolo… he allowed me to visit the studio for interviews and they sent me home with design documents, the in-house editor DromEd and an assignment for learning it." Once on board, Randy would play an increasingly integral role in the series, eventually heading up development of the third game, *Thief: Deadly Shadows*.

At the time though, the young Smith discovered that he had dropped himself into the deep end of the company's troubles… "Just before I arrived it looked like Looking Glass was going to close its doors," he recalls. "I remember people walking into the office to take back the [rented] plants which the studio was no longer able to pay for. Looking Glass's salvation was Intermetrics, who acquired the studio and gave it a couple more years. However, another failed project would have meant the studio's doom."

Tim backed up this sentiment with his own anecdote about the difficult period. "It was a real ordeal," he tells us. "There were long periods when I was spending every waking moment at work, especially in the last few months of the project. Early on, there was a lot of uncertainty about just what the game was going to be. And it all came together very late in the day: there was a general sense a couple months out that the whole thing could easily still fall short." It was only in the summer of 1998 that *Thief* really emerged as being a fun game to play – a mere three months before its scheduled release.



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS
- » **RELEASED:** 1998
- » **PLATFORM:** PC
- » **GENRE:** STEALTH

Although exclusive to Windows PCs, Randy reveals that if development had been easier, the original *Thief* would have ended up on consoles too: "I wasn't directly involved in product strategies, but I do know the upper-level people originally proposed the game as a PC and console game, with an eye toward N64 in particular, and that direction informed *Thief*'s interface, which was controller-ready and significantly streamlined."

Other console influences on the game include the difficulty levels, where higher difficulties affect the layout and mission goals. "The difficulty scheme was directly inspired by what they did in *GoldenEye*," agrees Tim. "I think that was a pretty early decision once we had the basic mission structure. In general, we laid out the core objectives first and then improvised Expert and bonus objectives during development. Plus, of course, there were some patterns that were repeated from level to level, like loot goals, non-violence goals and so on."

"I remember we made some mistakes along the way," admits Randy about *Thief*'s design. "For example, the Bonehoard level had architecture that was only used at certain difficulty settings, but players would beat their heads against the doors we used to seal those areas off, trying to figure out how to get inside. It's obvious in retrospect that wasn't a good design choice."

For those new to the *Thief* series, it stars Garrett as the thief, formerly belonging to a secret sect known as the Keepers, who are dedicated to keeping the world in balance. Contrasting them are the two rival pseudo-religions of the Hammerites and the Pagans. Over the game's 12 missions (15 in the *Thief GOLD* re-release) Garrett is caught between all three with some impressive twists en route. The first thing fresh players will notice is how exquisitely well written *Thief* is, even today. NPCs have a diverse range of dialogue while each mission is preceded by a Biblical-sounding passage.

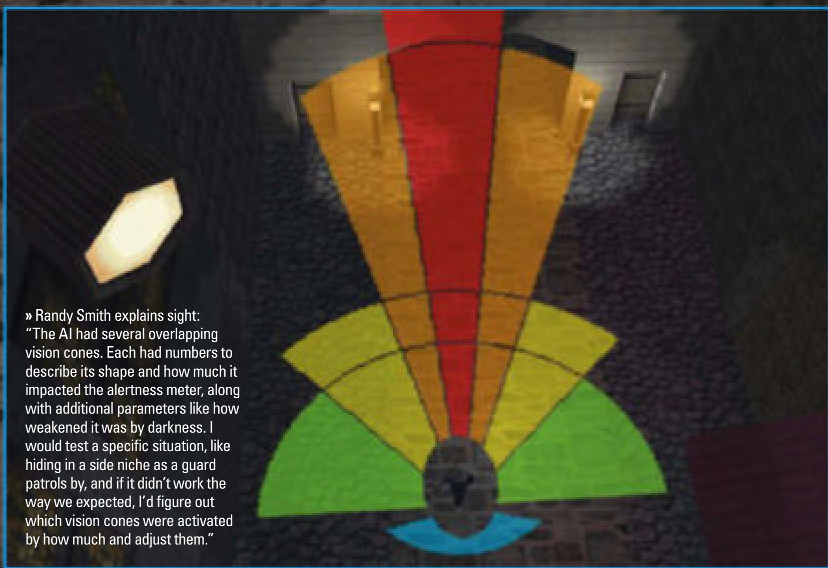
"The writing in *Thief* was a collaboration between several of us," explains Randy. "Ken Levine established some of the earliest thematic elements, factions and highest-level plot trajectory, although even that was probably a collaboration. A great deal was based on actual historical writings and research. Dan Thron, Terri Brosius and Laura Baldwin were the heavy hitters in terms of fleshing out the world, establishing the culture and the language."

Laura Baldwin joined Looking Glass when "fleeing biology after grad school", and had previously been involved with the MIT Assassins' Guild, which runs large-scale live action role-playing games. So fantasy writing was something that came naturally – the opening 'bear pit' conversation was entirely hers. Laura explained the poetic nature of the game's Hammerite excerpts: "The Bible has a lot of glorious dramatic language, and some seriously unmerciful hard-assery – that's what we were trying to emulate in the Hammerite language. It's a language that a lot of us are familiar with – 'if thine eye offends thee, pluck it out' – so I mostly tried to aim for something that would fit in 'King James With Extra Hammers'." ▶

» [PC] While NPCs have accurate 3D models, Garrett himself is a snowman: two large invisible blocks of collision detection.



"[They] originally proposed it as a PC and console game, with an eye toward N64 in particular" **RANDY SMITH**



» Randy Smith explains sight: "The AI had several overlapping vision cones. Each had numbers to describe its shape and how much it impacted the alertness meter, along with additional parameters like how weakened it was by darkness. I would test a specific situation, like hiding in a side niche as a guard patrols by, and if it didn't work the way we expected, I'd figure out which vision cones were activated by how much and adjust them."



» [PC] Search areas thoroughly – there are secrets everywhere! Perhaps dousing the fireplace will yield a passage?

The bespoke styles of dialogue for different groups really resonated with *Thief* fans, especially the slang word 'taffer'. Interestingly though, the colloquialisms were originally much richer than in the final game. According to Laura, Greg LoPiccolo felt there should be an argot, a thief's cant, that characters would speak. So instead of the word 'saw' they would say "I eagled something!" However, the internal AI state of enemies was conveyed through dialogue, and playtesters complained they couldn't understand it. So Laura stripped it all out, except for taffer, which became a verb, noun and pretend swear word. Players came up with numerous theories about the word's origin, recalls Laura: "I was kind of worried by the proposed origin of 'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief', making it an anti-Welsh slur! I don't *think* I had ever heard that rhyme before, but I kept thinking it would be all my fault that there was this offensive anti-Welsh language in our game. So I tried to stamp that out as the etymology." The actual origin of the word, as a back construction, was religious, from the name of the Pagans' god, Trickster.

This losing of colloquialisms raises a significant design feature: the 'sound propagation' system and NPC dialogue. NPCs all maintain individual states of player awareness, which is augmented/shared through audio communication – the fact players can eavesdrop said dialogue allows them to know each enemy's awareness and thereby outsmart them. It's an ingenious construction. Realistic AI is an illusion, because the computer running the software is omnipotent, always aware of all variables. Guard behaviour therefore is a simulacrum intended to convince the player that it's reacting to sensory stimuli.

"The awareness of guards was driven by a complex AI system, created by lead programmer Tom Leonard, and its ultimate goal was to be organic but provide adequate feedback and predictability for gameplay," explains Randy. "There were essentially three separate components: the sensory system of vision, hearing and a few miscellaneous senses such as getting bumped or noticing a missing treasure; the alertness meter, which rose between three or four distinct levels as the guard sensed more evidence of an intruder; and the behavioural outputs such as searching the nearby area or yelling out barks like 'Who's out there?'"

Compounding this complexity was the way sound travelled, being augmented by doors, walls and other obstructions. "I can't imagine *Thief* without a sound propagation system," continues Randy. "It was incredibly important as faint sounds approach or recede down a twisty corridor, and it was also crucial to getting the AI to behave correctly and not – for example – hear things that were nearby spatially but actually through solid rock."

However, to integrate this system the developers had to create a secondary map that dealt exclusively with sound data and overlay it. "Making the sound database wasn't so much rebuilding as mark-up," explains Tim about the difficult task. "The



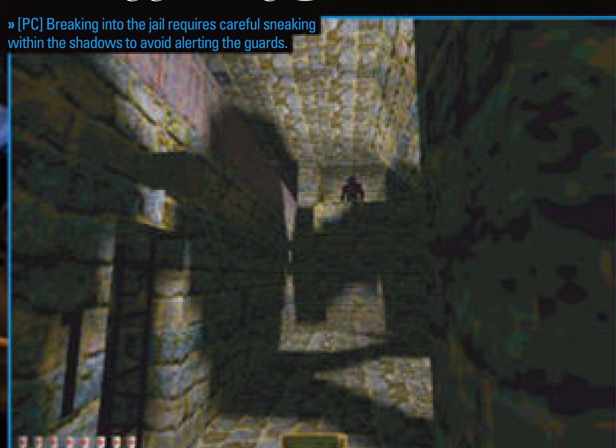
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SYSTEM SHOCK
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: DOS PC, MAC
YEAR: 1994

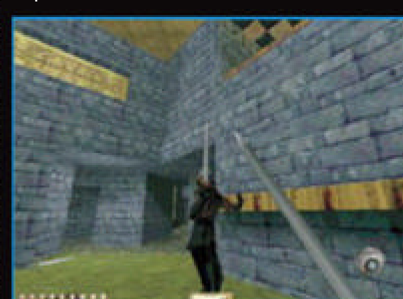
FLIGHT UNLIMITED
SYSTEM: DOS PC, WINDOWS PC, MAC
YEAR: 1995

SYSTEM SHOCK 2
SYSTEM: WINDOWS PC
YEAR: 1999

> *"The awareness of guards was driven by a complex AI system, created by lead programmer Tom Leonard"* **RANDY SMITH**



» [PC] Breaking into the jail requires careful sneaking within the shadows to avoid alerting the guards.





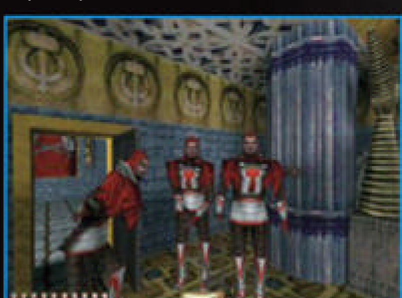


» [PC] The maps range from detailed and useful to vague and obtuse, depending on the mission.

rendering and physics meshes were too detailed to do what the audio system needed in real time. So we had to sketch a simplified version of the world, just a bunch of connected boxes, over the main map. This led to all sorts of bugs where the two representations didn't match. We eventually got some visualisation and debugging tools that helped make that much easier to troubleshoot."

Besides the technical aspect of design were the philosophical implications… "We had a bunch of lively debates about how stealth and sensing should work in the game", continues Randy. "For example, should a guard become more or less aware of your presence over time if you're partially hidden and he's just standing there looking in your direction? Should the AI be able to detect your obvious silhouette if you're in darkness in a hallway but backlit by a bright room?"

Some debates are archived in the online *Thief* development diary, which was maintained by Tim. In it he detailed the discussions that he and Randy had over scrapped ideas, such as potions that would allow Spider-Man-style wall walking, invisibility and shrinking. "We explicitly wanted to avoid unrestricted wall climbing," reveals Tim. "The illusion of being in a part of a greater city wouldn't have survived that kind of ability to test the boundaries. That's also why we went with the rope arrow (which can only bite into wood, not stone and such) rather than a more general-purpose grapple. We did talk briefly about shrinking. I wanted more variety of getaway resources. And the idea had been done to decent effect in Raven Software's *ShadowCaster*, years before. But we decided it would have been a big design commitment for it to pay off." The potions which did make it in were Healing, Water Breathing, Speed and Holy Water, which had to be used in conjunction with water arrows to kill undead enemies. While invisibility was abandoned, it did make it into the sequel, *Thief II: The Metal Age*.

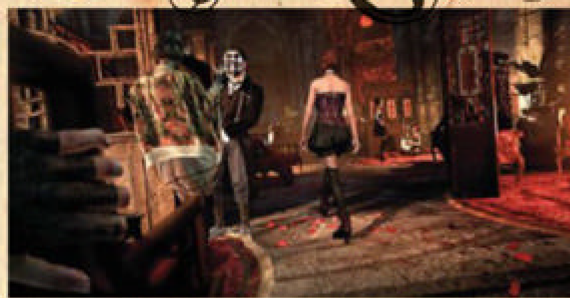


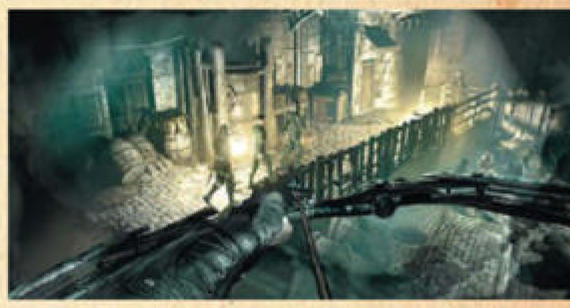
In fact, one of the best things about the *Thief* series is the fascinating range of equipment players are given, eschewing the modern gear of, say, *Splinter Cell* and mixing in magic, which you won't find in *Assassin's Creed*. So you have rope arrows for scaling heights, but also water arrows to douse flaming torches, and moss arrows, which create a carpet of sound-dampening green on hard floors.

"The fact that *Thief* was set in a hybrid world of magic and technology afforded us a lot of freedom in Garrett's equipment, the environments and their denizens," explains Randy. "However, it was a priority that the equipment supported the gameplay and felt appropriate to the moody universe."

"It's not quite like anything goes with magic, because the functions of things still need to be sensible to players based on their real-world knowledge," concurs Tim. "And we held on to some early thematic ▶

Thief Reborn





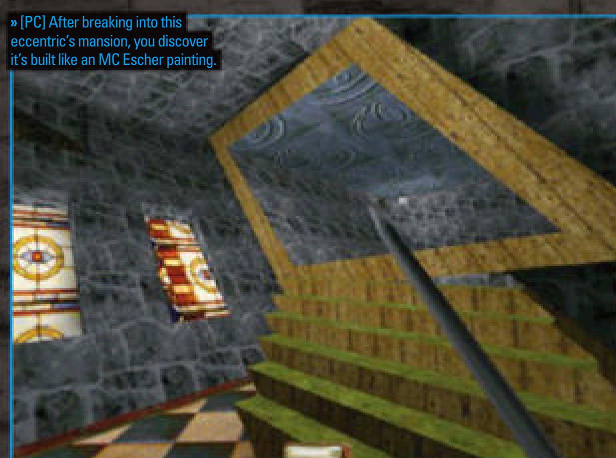
What do Thief's creators think of Eidos Montreal's series reboot?

"I visited Eidos just as they were getting *Thief 4* off the ground," says Randy. "Although it's been some years. They were definitely remaking the game in their own image, although they were faithful to the core elements fans will demand. They're doing some amazing stuff in terms of world building, which is encouraging. I suspect *Thief* fans will be excited by what Eidos is working on. I certainly hope so!"

"I've kept an eye on it," adds Tim. "I generally like what I'm seeing. They've clearly put a lot of time into understanding the property. But it's been a while since the last *Thief* – I'm sure some people seeing Garrett think he looks like 'that guy from *Assassin's Creed*', instead of vice versa!"

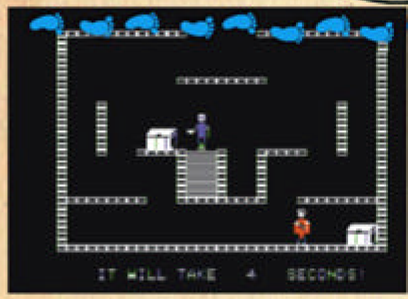
Commenting on how times have moved on, Randy adds: "It will never quite be the real *Thief* to me, just a reflection through new eyes. It's an interesting feeling to have strangers occupy something you were so involved in for so long, especially after so much time has passed."

"Yeah," agrees Tim. "I still feel a little ownership and a lot of pride in the original games, so there's that sense that I want them to take good care of my baby."



» [PC] After breaking into this eccentric's mansion, you discover it's built like an MC Escher painting.

Stealthily does it



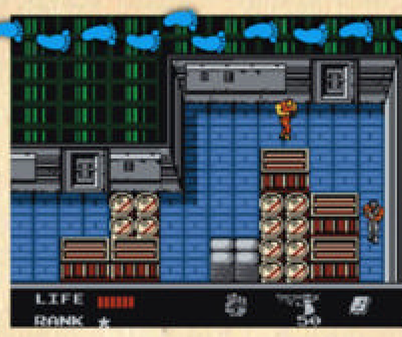
CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN – 1981

■ The granddaddy of all stealth games, by the late Silas Warner. Avoid detection, pick locks, hold up guards at gunpoint, steal enemy uniforms and escape Castle Wolfenstein! Started on Apple II with ports to multiple computers – the DOS version is the best, since it removes the annoying 'wall stun'.

I, ROBOT – 1983

■ It may have been an arcade flop, but Dave Theurer's masterpiece is well worth celebrating. In addition to being one of the first games to feature filled polygon graphics, it's also notable for its subtle stealth elements that see you trying to avoid a huge Sauron-style eye as you make your way through each level. A similar style of avoidance-based gameplay featured in Geoff Crammond's *The Sentinel*.





METAL GEAR SERIES – 1987 +

■ Hideo Kojima's great saga has endured as the poster child for the genre. Starting on the MSX2, the series is still going 25 years later. There are enough *Metal Gear* games to fill every entry in this list, and anyone who says *Snake's Revenge* isn't good is WRONG – it's excellent.



SPLINTER CELL SERIES – 2002 _

■ Based on the works of Tom Clancy, *Splinter Cell* was initially seen as the Western answer to Konami's popular *Metal Gear* series. It soon proved itself to be its own game thanks to a gruff central protagonist (originally voiced by Michael Ironside), lots of cool gadgets and the same heavy focus on stealth over kills that *Metal Gear* portrayed so well.



HITMAN SERIES – 2000 +

■ "Members of the *Hitman* team often told me that *Thief* was their favourite game and they were creating what they felt was an inadequate emulation," reveals Randy. "I certainly hold them in higher esteem than that, but it was still nice flattery. We were also certainly impressed with and inspired by *Hitman* – it wasn't exclusively the other way around!"

DEUS EX SERIES – 2000 +

■ Developed by Warren Spector, who did a stint at Looking Glass Studios briefly working on the first *Thief*, the original cyberpunk classic gave players an incredible degree of freedom. It was followed by a disappointing sequel, and then a flawed reboot in 2011. The original, published by Eidos, is still the best.



MANHUNT SERIES – 2003 +

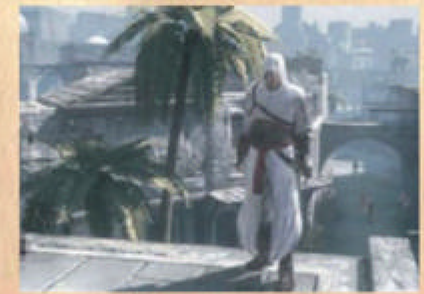
■ Rockstar's *Manhunt* immediately caused controversy on its release due to its focus on playing a death-row inmate who executes his foes in a number of increasingly grisly ways. Kills are facilitated by the player getting as close to an enemy as possible, meaning cars, low walls and other objects must be used to hide your deadly approach.





FORBIDDEN SIREN SERIES – 2003 +

■ A trilogy of unique survival-horror stealth games. It introduced the revolutionary concept of 'sightjacking', allowing you to tune into any enemy's vision so as to avoid them. It emphasised avoiding or destroying sources of light to stay hidden – much like *Thief*. The second game is the best of the three.

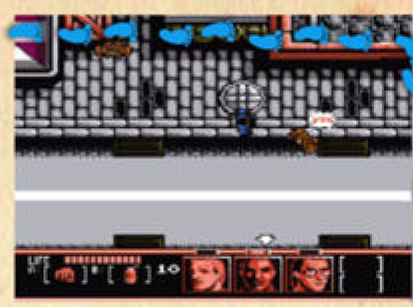


ASSASSIN'S CREED SERIES – 2007 +

■ One of the other stealth games besides *Tenchu* to take place in the past, *Assassin's Creed* also focuses on – you guessed it – assassinations. Set mostly during the Third Crusade, roughly 800 years ago, the story involves the Knights Templar and some missing artefacts. Has seen multiple sequels and spin-offs.



More key games that helped evolve the stealth genre



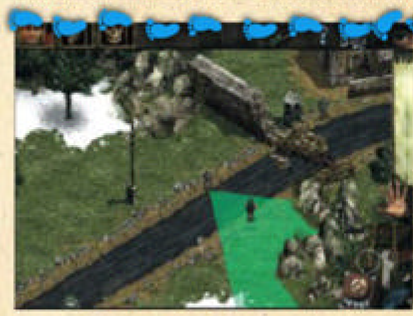
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – 1990

This sterling NES effort from Konami is well worth including, as it's one of the earliest examples of a licensed stealth game. Viewed from above it looks like a *Gauntlet* clone, but has a focus on avoiding enemies, who shout out a comical 'You!' when they spot you. A particularly nice touch is how you can switch through your team of three on the fly.



GOLDENEYE 007 – 1997

A strong influence on the development of *Thief*, this classic FPS from Rare actually started out as something more akin to *Virtua Cop*. The end result, after many changes, played beautifully, with diverse mission objectives and a clever variable difficulty system. Was followed by the equally excellent *Perfect Dark*.



COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES – 1998

Another influence on the original *Thief* and released in the stealth golden year of 1998, alongside *Tenchu*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Thief* itself. Emphasising group tactics, you're in charge of the eponymous WWII commandos as they avoid the green triangular vision cones of the Nazis.



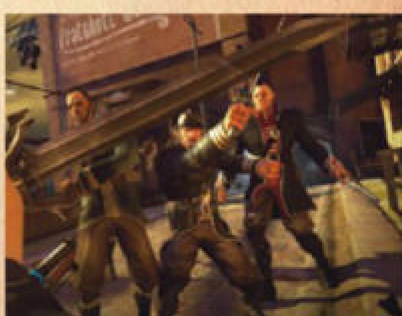
TENCHU SERIES – 1998 +

Released before *Metal Gear Solid* and one of the few stealth games to buck the trend of special agents or contemporary settings, *Tenchu* casts the player in the role of a ninja assassin in ancient Japan. Critical reception has often been lukewarm, which is a shame because the series is most excellent.



BATMAN: ARKHAM SERIES – 2009 +

Batman: Arkham Asylum is arguably the best superhero game ever made, mainly because developer Rocksteady knew what made the Dark Knight tick. While he's more than capable of holding his own in a fight thanks to the excellent combat system, strategically placed grates and gargoyles allow him to systematically pick off enemies one by one.



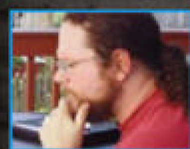
DISHONORED – 2012

Developed by the French company Arkane Studios, *Dishonored* is a stealth game with a lot of nods to *Thief* and other classics in the genre. Randy Smith also feels that possessing a rat in *Dishonored* is close to how *Thief*'s abandoned shrinking potion might have worked.

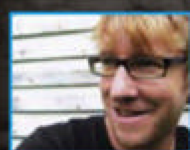


» [PC] Later missions change in style – but you must admit, *Thief* continuously surprises you!

NPCs all maintain individual states of player awareness, which is augmented/shared through audio communication



» Tim Stellmach – lead designer



» Randy Smith – designer



» Laura Baldwin – writer

constraints about the rules of magic in our world – the player's main tools map pretty cleanly onto the Aristotelian elements of water, fire, air and earth. But things really only needed to make sense symbolically, not realistically."

In addition to 'on-site procurement' of such equipment, Garrett can use the loot he's stolen to buy more for the subsequent mission. This encourages exploration, since even with the objectives complete, it's always worth seeking out hidden valuables. Tim explains how they tried to keep this system balanced: "There was a lot of potential there for a destabilising positive feedback loop. We were counting on the fact that we made loot and gear 'use it or lose it'. So you could never get too far ahead or behind in resources… We tried to serve lots of information to players about the situation around them and provide in-game getaway resources, so a sudden setback wasn't necessarily a hard failure to the last saved game."

As mentioned, all of this came about only after months of toil. Along the way many, many things were cut, including several multiplayer modes so the team could focus on finishing the single-player. Only in the last three months, from a schedule of over two-and-a-half years, did the vision of *Thief* as a stealth-focused game cement itself. Against so many odds it reached retail and became an astounding success. So much so that it received a 'director's cut'-style follow-up, *Thief GOLD*; and two years after the original, a sequel. But that's another taffer's tale to taffing tell.

SPECIAL THANKS To all three of our interviewees, who went to great lengths to assist with this feature; Hardcore Gaming 101 for the *Siren* screenshot; and www.thief-thecircle.com for concept art.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

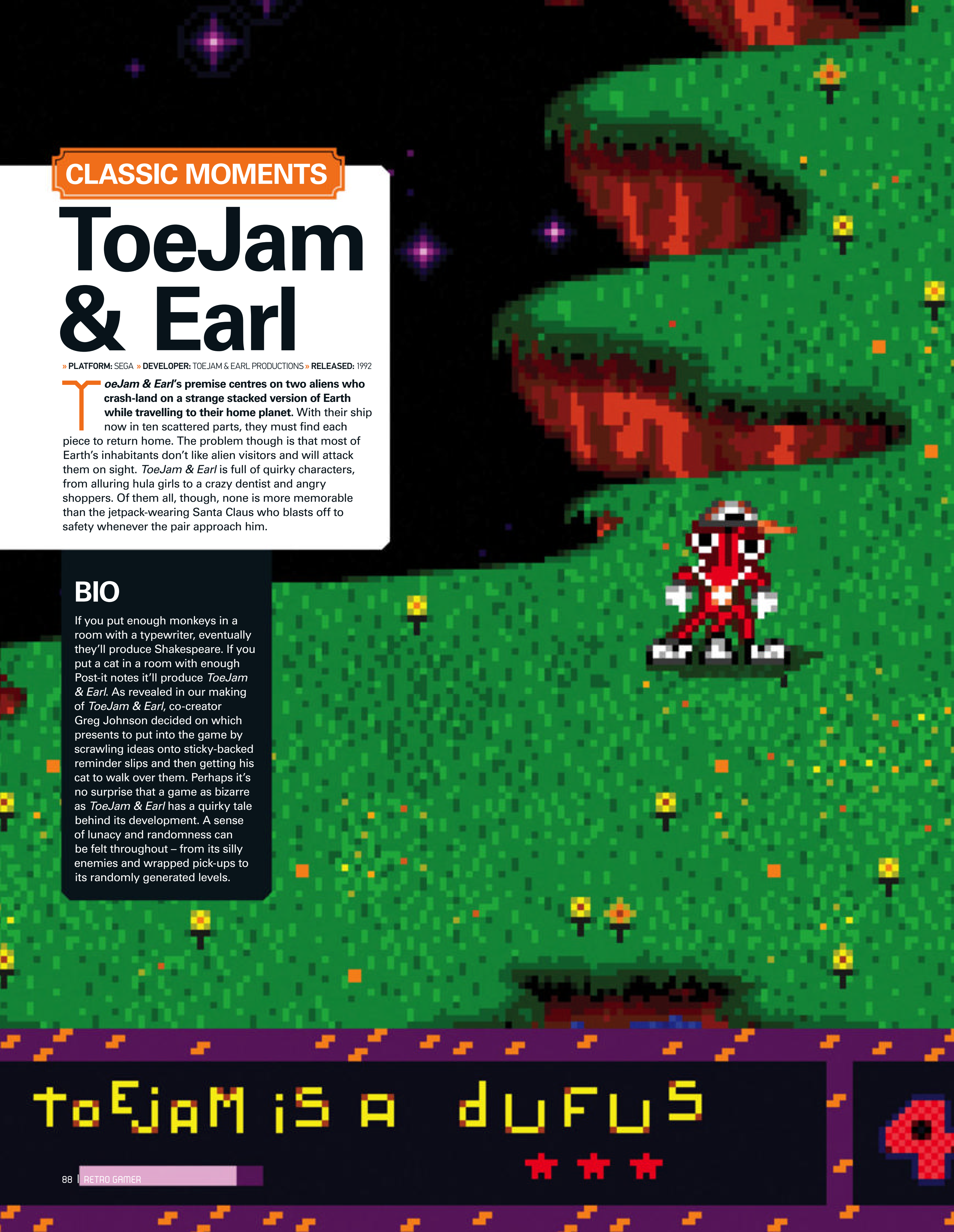
ToeJam & Earl

» **PLATFORM:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** TOEJAM & EARL PRODUCTIONS » **RELEASED:** 1992

***T**oeJam & Earl*'s **premise centres on two aliens who crash-land on a strange stacked version of Earth while travelling to their home planet.** With their ship now in ten scattered parts, they must find each piece to return home. The problem though is that most of Earth's inhabitants don't like alien visitors and will attack them on sight. *ToeJam & Earl* is full of quirky characters, from alluring hula girls to a crazy dentist and angry shoppers. Of them all, though, none is more memorable than the jetpack-wearing Santa Claus who blasts off to safety whenever the pair approach him.

BIO

If you put enough monkeys in a room with a typewriter, eventually they'll produce Shakespeare. If you put a cat in a room with enough Post-it notes it'll produce *ToeJam & Earl*. As revealed in our making of *ToeJam & Earl*, co-creator Greg Johnson decided on which presents to put into the game by scrawling ideas onto sticky-backed reminder slips and then getting his cat to walk over them. Perhaps it's no surprise that a game as bizarre as *ToeJam & Earl* has a quirky tale behind its development. A sense of lunacy and randomness can be felt throughout – from its silly enemies and wrapped pick-ups to its randomly generated levels.





MORE CLASSIC TOEJAM & EARL MOMENTS

Buddy up



ToeJam & Earl is an adventure best enjoyed with a friend. Working with a pal to locate the scattered ship parts, scavenge for food and get back home is much more entertaining with a mate. Sega apparently had doubts that a split-screen could work on its console. *ToeJam & Earl* not only proves it can be done but that it works really well too.

Taking a nap



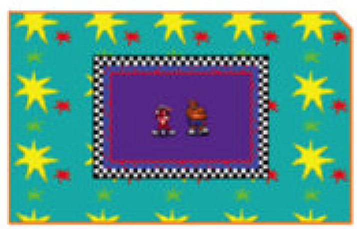
Leave the controls alone for a few seconds and our heroes will quickly become bored and fall asleep. When this happens, though, you can wake them up by bashing madly at the fire buttons. Doing this causes a voice to start shouting to disturb them from their slumber. Seriously, if these guys were any more laidback they'd be horizontal.

That's a wrap!

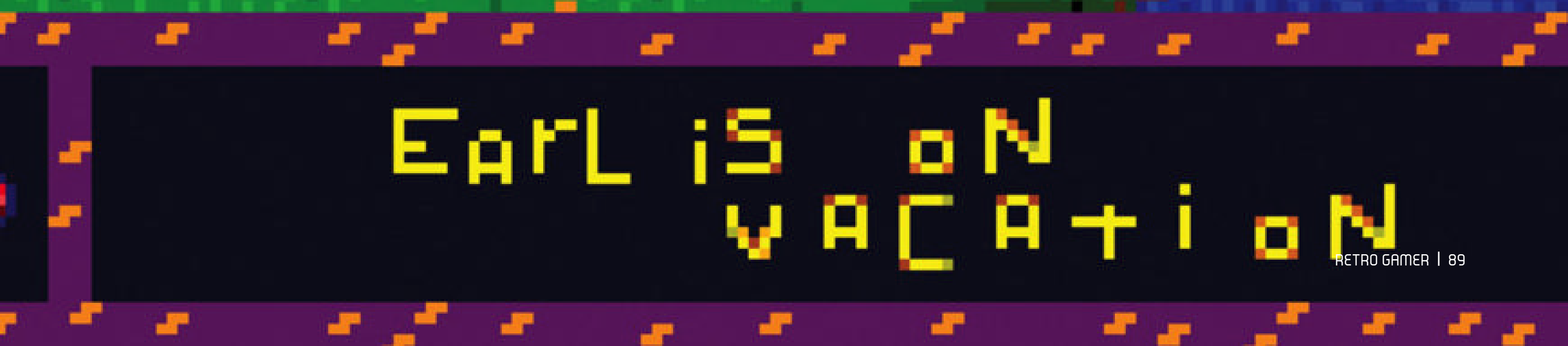


A lot of *ToeJam & Earl*'s gameplay involves finding and opening gift-wrapped presents that are scattered around its world. As they're wrapped, there's an element of luck to what you find inside. Sometimes gifts can contain useful items; other times their contents can be really unhelpful. And if you're really unfortunate, your gift is death.

Funky toons



Music is a big part of *ToeJam & Earl*'s design. Not only does it have a cool funky soundtrack and its story contain several music references (the aliens hail from a planet called Funkatron and integral components to their crashed ship are two large speakers), but the 'Jam Out' section lets you overlay your own beats to a selection of music tracks.

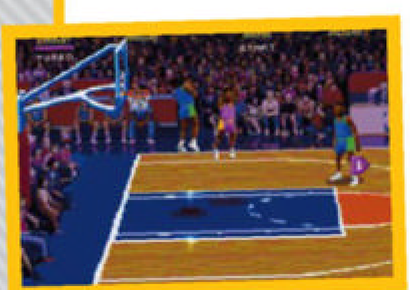




TOM KALINSKE

He was the man who presided over the rise of the Mega Drive, but Tom Kalinske's competitive mentality carried him to another achievement: knocking Nintendo from its perch. David Crookes talks to the former Sega of America CEO about his six years in power and his growing hatred for the firm's rival

Tom Kalinske can tick a few boxes. Launching Sonic. Beating Nintendo. Selling more 16-bit game consoles than anyone else. Not bad for someone who intended to take some time out, fresh on the back of having bought and then sold the toy company Matchbox. It was this and his 18 years at Mattel that brought him to the attention of Sega's Hayao Nakayama who caught up with Kalinske on a beach, had him fly to Japan and then wooed him with the prospect of working for a firm that was unleashing the Mega Drive (aka Genesis) and Game Gear. Kalinske joined when Michael Katz was the CEO of Sega of America. But Kalinske felt Sega had overpriced the Mega Drive and he flew to Japan to tell them. Before long, Kalinske was president and CEO of Sega of America himself.



» [Mega Drive] Tom says Sega was keen to have licensed sports games on the Mega Drive since they were instantly recognisable to gamers.

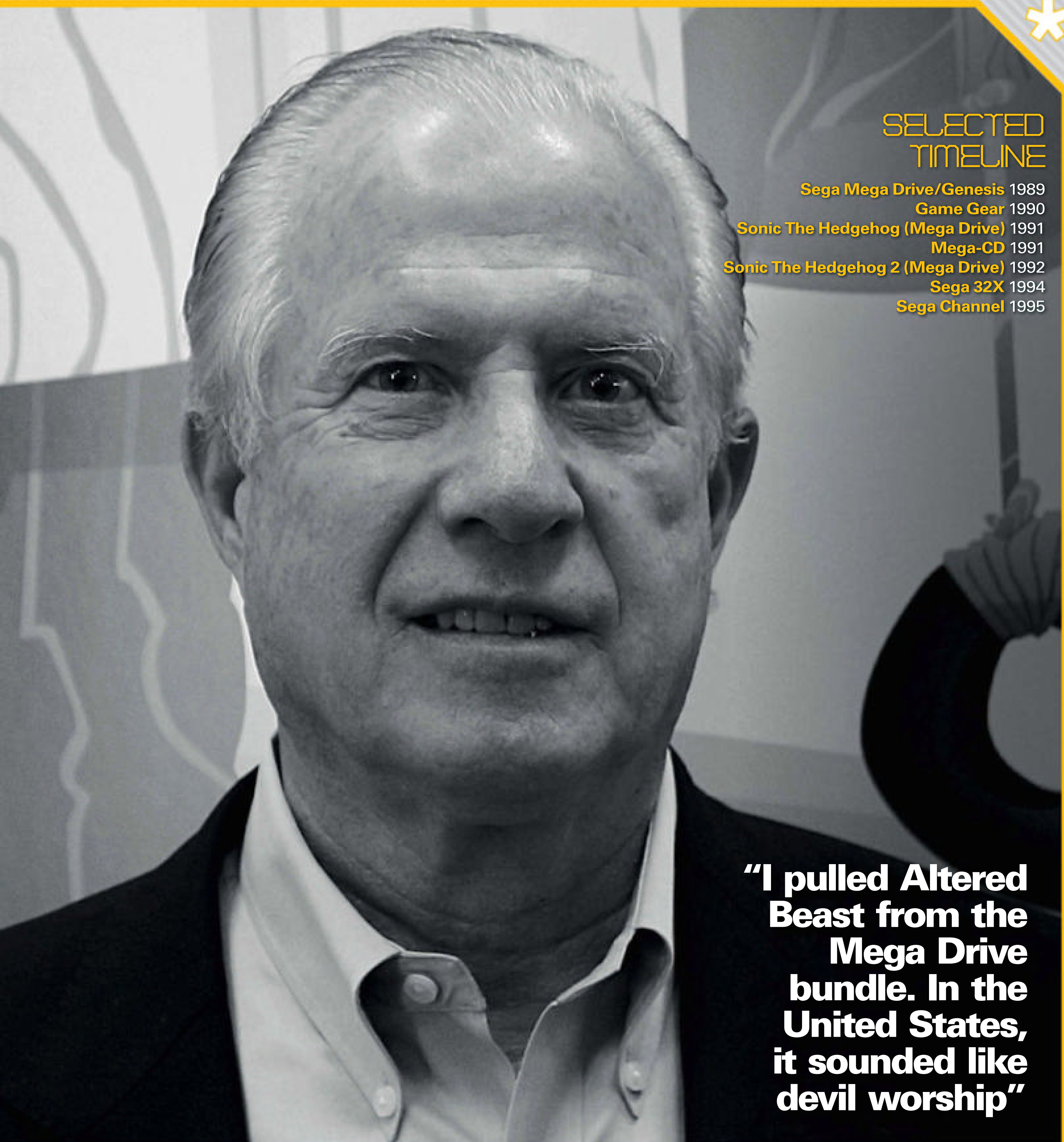
Is it true that you came into gaming later in your life?
Yes, certainly. It was really when I was recruited to run Sega in 1990. Before then I worked for Mattel for 17 years and ended up as CEO in 1985. I left in 1987 to go buy Matchbox toys out of receivership in the UK… When I turned it around and moved manufacturing to China – that took three years – I sold it to Tyco Toys in 1990, which was later bought by Mattel. So it went full circle.

And you joined Sega…
Nakayama recruited me to run Sega in 1990. In those days Sega was quite a small entity. We were tiny and Nintendo had 94 per cent of the videogame industry, or maybe 98%… and the rest of us were nothing. But we were growing rapidly on the basis of the 16-bit Genesis technology and *Sonic The Hedgehog* and lots of sports games in the United States and what have you. So we were becoming quite large.

Was it a difficult environment in which to start?
When I started in the videogame business, the whole of the entire industry was just starting to make a comeback after that horrible collapse of Atari. We had Nintendo coming back in and re-establishing the industry. But in the early Nineties it was only a $10 billion industry.

By the time you arrived at Sega, the Master System was on its way out and the Genesis was the key console for Sega, wasn't it?
Well it had just been launched and, in the mind of the board in Japan, it wasn't successful. I was brought in really to make it a success. I think only 100,000 Genesis had been sold at that point and so I had to do a lot of things to make it successful.

What did you do?
I basically reduced the price from $200 to $149, I took [out] the bundled game *Altered Beast* [which, to middle America] sounded like devil worship – it was a problem. I insisted on putting *Sonic The Hedgehog* in with the hardware. The word in Japan was that I was crazy to put our best title in the hardware. They asked, what sense does that make? Nobody makes money on the sale of hardware, they said, and now we're giving up a high profit margin, so that didn't make any sense to them. And I insisted on developing lots of sports titles based on American sports, American football, baseball, basketball. I mean licences like NBA and NFL were always special, as was FIFA Soccer in Europe. And we did more original titles based on US and European cartoon characters. They thought I was nuts but they agreed to it.



SELECTED TIMELINE

Sega Mega Drive/Genesis 1989
Game Gear 1990
Sonic The Hedgehog (Mega Drive) 1991
Mega-CD 1991
Sonic The Hedgehog 2 (Mega Drive) 1992
Sega 32X 1994
Sega Channel 1995

"I pulled Altered Beast from the Mega Drive bundle. In the United States, it sounded like devil worship"

It's a good job, as it did so well.

In 1991, we sold well over a billion units of Genesis and lots and lots of software…

Were you involved with the Master System at all?

Well I was to a degree. I know that the Master System was still very popular in Europe and Latin America and other markets. It was never very popular in the United States… We did continue to do some software development for it… So I had a good connection with Sega in the UK; Sega in Latin America, because of their need for having good software on the Master System.

Was it very much game-on in terms of competition with Nintendo, though?

By 1992 our revenues were at least $500 million and by 1994 over a billion dollars… so we grew very, very rapidly. The other part of the strategy was I took on Nintendo in advertising and made fun of them, basically ridiculed Nintendo and basically all their consumers. They were a little kids product, you know. If you were a five- or six-year-old you can play a Nintendo, but if you wanted to be a teenager or play like a college kid you needed a Genesis. All that stuff worked and we became a very large and important entity at that time.

The adverts were pretty scathing…

Yes, exactly, it was sit back and it was welcome to the next level, you know. One commercial I remember we had a smoky old rundown truck with a Super Nintendo on the back and we made fun and we basically equated it to a slow old truck. We were the sleek Ferrari and that's what the Genesis was in. Basically we were faster and better than they were… We just basically made a lot of fun of them… There were many different commercials that all ended with the Sega screen and the 'Welcome to the Next Level' line.



» In October 1991, shortly after the release of *Sonic*, Sega held a press conference in New York with Tengen, to show an alliance and to promote the fact that Tengen would be making 40 games for Sega in the coming years.

Was it a conscious decision to make the most of Sonic?

One year we announced Sonic Tuesday, which was Sonic 2, when we were going to launch it on Tuesday November 2. Every store in America would be fully stocked with the Sonic 2 on Sonic Tuesday. We literally freighted all the shipments into every store in the country, almost 20,000 retail outlets, a big, big undertaking. Of course we sold… it was like 400,000 in two days and it went on to sell over a million units.



» [Mega Drive] As well as basketball, there were sporting franchises associated with ice hockey, American football and soccer among others.

Sega ended up surpassing Nintendo in US market share?…

Yes, by 1993 we actually were equal to Nintendo and by 1994 we passed them in the share of market in the United States and so we were able to overcome difficulty. It was quite a struggle initially to get anybody to do anything with us, but through marketing and loads of business we were eventually able to attract more and more third-party licensees to develop on the Genesis system.



* FIVE TO PLAY

Great games that happened under Tom's watch

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



SONIC WAS released in 1991 and bundled with the Mega Drive. Sega was keen on a renewed push in America and felt that this game was fresh and invigorating and would help shift consoles. Still, for a firm that was trying to bring gaming to the masses and be seen as 'grown up' – and was making much play about how Nintendo was for kids – a game about a blue hedgehog saving his fluffy friends could have been seen as childish. Truth is, *Sonic The Hedgehog* was jaw-dropping, with runs, high jumps, spins and a speed that was faster than an alcoholic within sniffing distance of a pint of Special Brew and it appealed to the keen gamer. Alex Kidd was shifted aside and Sonic became Sega's new mascot. By 1992, Sega had taken 55 per cent of the American market.

ALTERED BEAST



SEGA HAD struggled to get third-party support because the key developers were tied into strict contracts with Nintendo. Things began to change when the Mega Drive was launched alongside four games: *Super Thunder Blade, Alex Kidd And The Enchanted Castle, Space Harrier 2* and *Altered Beast*. The latter was bundled with the console but Kalinske believed the name would be off-putting for some parents, the people who would be buying the console for their children. The game, however, was a smash hit in the arcades in 1988. It didn't fare as well on conversion to the Mega Drive, though. The controls of this side-scrolling brawler were clumsy and there was a washed out, browny look to the game, yet it's worth digging out for nostalgia purposes.

GUNSTAR HEROES



IT'S A RUN-AND-GUN game that appeared on the Mega Drive and Game Gear and was so good that it was awarded the Best Action Game of 1993 by *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. The fast-paced action showcased the hardware of the Mega Drive and showed developers were getting into their stride with the technology. It wasn't easy to play, by any means, but it was in an era of hardcore perseverance. The scaling and rotation and the attention to detail of the animation shone throughout. The game combined levels that differed from each other with a two-player option that was so frenetic that even when there were loads of enemies to get shut of, the action remained as fast as ever. If you want to experience Mega Drive gaming at its finest, look no further.

Was 1994 a big year for you?
It was. We released the 32X in that year. It was clearly a step down. That was clearly a machine that was just going for a short period of time to be able to make plain that you had 32 [bits] even though you really didn't have a 32-bit machine. It was a stopgap measure. Originally it was Japan's idea… Somehow we ended up with having to do the development of the hardware, which was unusual for the United States. Usually all the hardware development's done in Japan.

Why didn't Japan do it?
I guess the hardware guys had too much to do to develop the Saturn in Japan, so we ended up having to develop it.

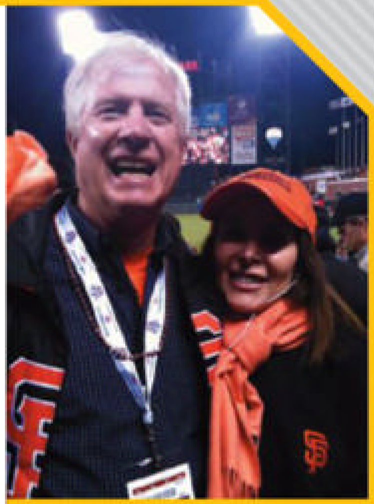
You also had the Sega Channel that year…
It was really hard. There were a couple of innovations that we had that the rest of the industry disagreed with. People didn't like the Sega Channel. We were talking about doing it with the Genesis and we had a device that connected to the console and the TV set-top box, the cable box. It allowed the storage of something like 25 games and we would change a third of them every month or something like that… It gave the consumer a pretty good choice but not the kind of choice you'd have today, obviously.

Was it difficult to implement?
I had to work with Time Warner and TCI because between the two of them had about 80 per cent of all cable in the US… Originally I had only intended to work with Time Warner. One partner's tough enough; having two is certainly difficult. So I was proceeding along with Time Warner on this project and [it] was very hard to engineer something that would work even within the Time Warner system. They had like four or five different cable boxes, depending on the region, and there were different specs for each one of these damn things. Then one day the TCI guys come storming into my office, literally. I felt like I was being attacked by gangsters. They said, "You cannot do this with just Time Warner, you have to do it with us too." They literally demanded that we work with them, and since they own a reasonable share of the cable boxes in the US, I figured, well, what the hell, we'll give this a go. So we did.



How did you get around the problems?
We had another engineering issue: how do you devise a box that worked with the different cable boxes that they had? In total we get to design something that could interface, connect and work with a huge number of different specs. There was like 10 to 20 different specs with these boxes. It was quite an engineering challenge. But anyway we got it done and it worked pretty well for a while… We got up to... 150,000 subscribers… across the United States. They were paying $15 a month for a year, so it was a pretty reasonable business.

You mentioned there were a couple of innovations that the industry disagreed with…
Yes, I was the first one to say, "The rental of videogames is a good idea" and I openly supported videogame rental out of Blockbuster. It was huge in those days. I did that because, in my opinion, we were making games that took 50 to 100 hours to play and finish so if you were going to rent one for a weekend and pay $3 a day and $8 or $9 dollars or something by the time you returned it to the store, you still wouldn't have finished that game. If it was a good game you were going to want to either keep renting it or buy it and most of the time you're going to go buy it if it was a good enough game. So to me the rental business was just a way of testing and for us to call out those products that weren't all that good. In other words, if we rented it out and it didn't do well then it probably wasn't going to do well at retail and then we should get rid of it. So I liked the rental business for that reason and it actually worked.

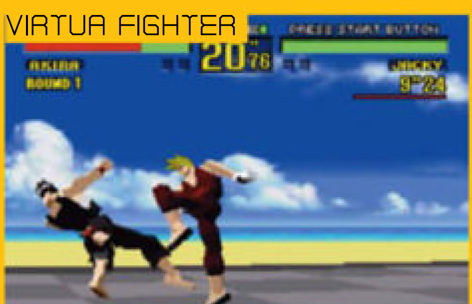


» Tom with his wife when the San Francisco Giants won the World Series.

In 1994, Sony introduced the PlayStation. How did Sega react?
In the early 1990s, we had a very strong relationship with Sony because, I know this sounds strange today given how big Sony is, but Sony back in those days didn't have a clue how to do videogames, not a clue. They had a studio in LA, and Olaf Olafsson was head of Sony Entertainment. He came and visited the studio and realised that they didn't know how to do videogames and so he asked us at Sega to help him.

> “I generally had this hatred for Nintendo, so everything they did, I started to figure out how to hurt it”

VIRTUA FIGHTER



LAUNCHED WITH the Sega Saturn but also coming out on the 32X, there was a lot of pressure heaped on *Virtua Fighter*, which had to battle to grab the attention of punters away from the rival machines coming out at around the same time. Hardware was having a tough time of it. There had been enough launches, for sure, with the CD32, Jaguar and 3DO failing to get a bite. *Virtua Fighter* was converted by AM2, the original coin-op developers, and it looked and played a treat. Its polygon characters were amazingly good, especially when animated, and it gave the game an edge over 2D rivals. For Sega, it was about finding something to astonish gamers and it did this by combining what was essentially the simplicity of 2D gameplay with awe-inspiring looks.

PHANTASY STAR IV



THE PIONEERING RPG series had already made inroads into the public consciousness on the Master System in 1987. This fourth iteration was for the Mega Drive and it was incredible. Ironically, given the battles between Sega and Nintendo at the time, the game was eventually made available on the Wii Virtual Console – it's well worth playing again, too. This game is stunning and ranks high among gamers, with many considering it to be one of Sega's finest releases and one of the most superlative RPGs ever made for a 16-bit system. There was a sense that the game would help ease people onto the forthcoming Saturn when it was released in America and Europe.





» [Mega Drive] *Streets Of Rage* had an arcade beauty about it, with Sega keen to promote the Mega Drive as a mature gaming machine.

And did you?
Well we needed third-party support so, of course, we helped Sony. We lent them people, we lent them technology, we literally taught them how to program videogames. And as systems were changing from cartridge to optical disc CD-ROMs, we kind of co-operated together. It was a Sega CD device that led them to a Genesis to play videogames on an optical disc. This had never been done before. And so we sort of, you know, it's sort of crazy when you think about it now: Sega taught Sony how to do the games on optical discs and then later – a few years later – Sony bring out their own videogame system which is an optical disc system that eventually takes off in the industry.

It was major competition for Sega, which had its own console, the Saturn to promote, wasn't it? What was the buzz like around that product at that time?
We announced the Saturn at E3. And that was very controversial and frankly, truth be known, I didn't want to do it. I had a big fight with Sega and headquarters and the chairman of the company who insisted that we introduce the Saturn before Sony [launched the PlayStation] and therefore we had to hurry up our launch instead of doing it in September as we were planning on doing. That would have meant having enough quantities of hardware to supply all of the major retailers. The chairman insisted on an early launch and therefore we didn't have enough quantities to go to everybody so we had to select just a few retailers to divide the product for distribution.

> "I knew it was going to piss everybody off. It was going to really annoy retailers that didn't get the Saturn in stock"

Why didn't you want to do it?
I knew it was going to piss everybody off. It was going to really annoy retailers that didn't get the Saturn in stock and of course that's exactly what happened. It was very uncomfortable for the company. Frankly it was one of the reasons that I decided to leave Sega and I was recruited out in 1996 by Mike Milken and Larry Ellison who formed a new company called Knowledge Universe.



» [Mega Drive] Tom played a big part in the 'Sonic Tuesday' campaign.

Sony announced after you and came in at $299 for the PlayStation while the Saturn was retailing for $399. It must have been a blow.
Right after I made that announcement, Steve Race who used to work for me at Sega made the announcement for Sony that they were going to introduce at a lower price – far lower price – than the Saturn was at. So that was also an exciting announcement. I just didn't like the idea of launching a product knowing it was going to sell out, not being able to resupply. It wasn't a good idea from that standpoint



Did you feel that in creating the Mega-CD it was more of a stopgap before the Saturn came out? Do you think that maybe you should have moved straight to a new console at that time?
It really wasn't possible and I know this sounds crazy, but it was really hard to figure out how to put games on an optical disc initially. Even the hardware systems that came out – the Saturn and the PlayStation – they had to hash a tremendous amount of their game off of the CD into the memory that was in the system.

In a sense it was like putting a cartridge in the system that you then took information off of the optical disc, hashed in the cartridge and then played back on the screen, because the machines weren't capable of moving fast enough across the optical disc to generate real-time gameplay where it felt like you were actually controlling the action on the screen.

So it was a learning curve that the developers had to go through. You needed something like the original Mega Drive as a learning experience to go through this before you could adequately program the Saturn or the Sony PlayStation. I don't think the Mega-CD was a mistake at all. We didn't sell a lot of it but it really enabled our programmers to get up to speed on how to go about program for machines with an optical disc.

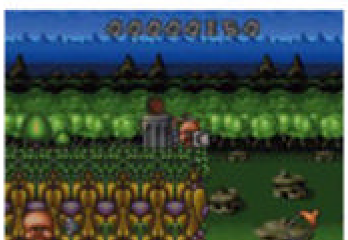
And what about Nintendo? What did you think when you saw the Virtual Boy in 1995?
I didn't think much of that. I didn't think that was going to be successful. I remember at Sega we had virtual reality arcade machines, and while they were sort of interesting they just never really caught on. It wasn't a big deal. I wasn't too concerned about that particular entry to the market but then I generally had this hatred for Nintendo, so everything they did, I started to figure out how to hurt it.

Sony did some work with Nintendo as well didn't they? Didn't they try to create a PlayStation system with them?
Yeah. They tried to.

Were you impressed by the Saturn, though?
I remember being disappointed when we first saw the specs. Incidentally, at that time I received a call from Jim Clark who was then CEO of Silicon Graphics. I got to know him a little bit socially and he said, "Hey, we've got a great chipset here that we think would be terrific for a videogame system, why don't you come and take a look at it." And so our R&D guys and I went over and looked and we were pretty impressed by it. So we actually called the Sega headquarters and asked Jeff and his hardware guys to come out and look at it. And they did, and they felt that what they had and what they were putting in Saturn was better. But frankly when you saw what Silicon Graphics' chipset could do, it seemed more impressive. So we were disappointed in the capabilities of the Saturn right from day one and disappointed that we couldn't get them to utilise something like the Silicon Graphics chip, which by the way became what Nintendo used.

Sega had entered into a short-lived merger with Bandai, too…
Yeah, there were discussions on combining the two companies and it went pretty far… down the path of occurring, but Japanese management style likes to gain consensus of their internal employees, at least in Japan. When they submitted that idea, the employees – particularly the R&D guys – rejected it, so that merger fell apart. And just before I left Sega, there was an effort for Sega to work with Microsoft. There was a deal in place there. And by the way, Sony and Sega were going to do a joint new game hardware platform. I don't know if you're aware of that?

No. Not at all.
Olaf and I decided just before PlayStation and before Saturn that we ought to do a joint multiple-disc hardware platform, and our reasoning was very logical. We all lost money on hardware, it was a known fact. Nintendo might have been making



» [Mega Drive] *Chuck Rock*, by Core Design, was an example of games by the third-party producers who flocked to develop for the Mega Drive.



» Tom didn't like that *Altered Beast* was the Mega Drive's free game, so quickly changed it.

a little of money on theirs because they had very good efficiencies and operations but they weren't making much and so if Sony were going to enter into the videogame hardware business, for sure they were going to lose money. And so the proposition was we went with what we thought was a good set of specs to respective managements in Japan. Sony thought this was a really good idea and our deal was we'd share the loss on the hardware and whichever one of us made software sales, that was all for that company, we weren't sharing that. So if Sega was more successful on software so be it, if Sony was more successful on software, so be it, we each make a profit on software. Now, if you think about it back in this space, Sega was a much better software developer than Sony was so it obviously would have been, in my opinion, [to] Sega's benefit to do this.

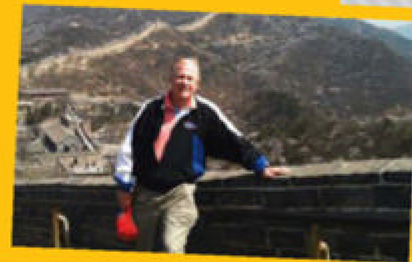
But anyway Sony said, "Yeah, we should do that." We went to my manager at Sega and he said, "Are you nuts, Sony doesn't know how to do hardware, why would we want to do that? Why would we want to enter into an agreement with them? We're much better than they are." Well I think that was a critical strategic mistake by Sega's senior management. And that actually occurred before the Saturn mistake.

You left Sega in 1996. What would you say were your major achievements there?
Clearly my greatest achievement was passing the Nintendo share market in the mid 1990s on the back of the Genesis and Game Gear. And also, in terms of contribution to the industry. I think probably that the formation of E3 was an achievement too.

✱ YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

"You keep testing my memory cells," says Tom Kalinske. "Please remember that I left Sega in the spring of 1996". Nevertheless, we pitch some reader questions to him…

What would have been your position regarding 2D games in the West for the Saturn versus what Bernie Stolar believed in?
My belief back then was that very good 2D games could still be enjoyed and not everything had to immediately go to 3D, but the market forces like the next cool thing and 3D in those years was certainly that so most developers only wanted to do 3D. I still love some of my old 2D games.



In hindsight, do you think it was a good decision not to release *Grandia* in the UK, despite a massive demand for it?
I was aware *Grandia* was in development but I don't believe it was released until 1997, well after I left Sega, and in any case the decision on what to introduce in a market like the UK would have been left up to the local country management. Even if I had stayed at Sega, doubt I would have been involved in that decision.



Do you think the 32X was a massive mistake for Sega?
It was always supposed to be an interim step until a real 32-bit machine could be introduced and for Sega that was the Saturn. The thought was to have an add-on device for the Genesis that improved its capabilities to 32-bit graphics and speed. Originally Japan was going to do all the development and were committed to producing many games for it. But at some point that changed, Japan said it's all yours to finish. We had already announced it to the trade and had to complete the hardware ourselves in the US as well as most of the games for it, with little coming out of Japan. I think if the strategy had been executed properly it would have worked much better in terms of extending the life of Genesis.

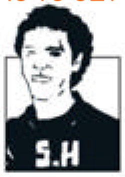
Did you truly believe in the potential of the Saturn as a market leader? If so, when did it become clear to you that it would flop badly (especially in North America)?
Neither our US head of R&D or myself were happy with the specs, schedule or price of the upcoming Saturn system so we really wanted to keep Genesis around longer and we felt it had a lot of life left in it, but obviously Japan disagreed. So in hindsight if we had executed 32X better, had Japan development support, produced better software for it, I still think it would have worked and help keep the Genesis business strong for several more years than what occurred.
I feel the biggest mistakes Sega made were both Saturn and, while I wasn't involved, the Dreamcast. Those two systems were both mistakes in my opinion.



The Evil Dead

WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU. NOT ANOTHER PEEP. TIME TO GO TO SLEEP

» RETROREVIVAL



» COMMODORE 64
» PALACE SOFTWARE
» 1984

I've yet to see the recent *Evil Dead* remake. It's got me curious but also slightly worried. While I like the idea of remakes on paper, I have yet to see one that has truly satisfied – but then perhaps by their very nature they can't?

If you want to see a remake then it's very likely you have a fondness of the source material, so a comparison between old and new is as inevitable as the crushing disappointment felt from the latter never living up to former – after all, no movie can compete with years of fond memories that have been generated by countless re-watches of another.

The same sense of disappointment I often feel from watching remakes is the same I get from many videogames which are based on some of my favourite films (Ocean's *RoboCop*, which shows how one should be done, is the biggest exception).

The Evil Dead is my favourite horror film of all time. It nails the exact template I would follow if I was ever asked to write/create one: a likeable hero being put through the worst kind of wringer, a simple yet effective story, a creepy setting, and make-up… lots and lots of make-up. None of that CG rubbish.

In terms of capturing the movie's main narrative beats, Palace Software's *The Evil Dead* videogame adaptation does a pretty good job. Released in 1984 and coming on a neat blood-red cassette tape, it's a top-down survival action/strategy horror game in which you play likable everyman Ash Williams. Taking place inside the film's spooky cabin, you must help Ash to batten down its hatches, avoid hideous mutants and ultimately destroy the Book Of The Dead, which is causing all the drama. To do this you must help Ash survive long enough to score enough points to make the accursed book appear on the screen and, when this happens, throw it into the fireplace to finally destroy it for good.

Sadly though, while *The Evil Dead* captured the premise of the movie well, it was marred by some newly introduced horror: clunky controls and crude visuals which equates to a frustrating and confusing experience. It's a shame too, as with a few tweaks I reckon this had the potential to be a decent little tie-in. *

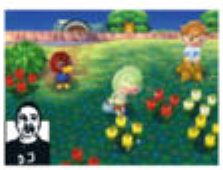

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RETRORATED



>> It's been a great month for games this issue. Fez and Pinball FX 2 finally make it to PC, Donkey Kong Country Returns receives a 3D makeover, while we go iOS crazy with reviews of Karateka Classic, Gun Commando and the latest part of the Fire & Forget franchise

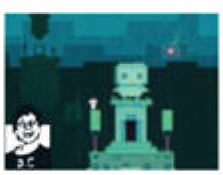
PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Animal Crossing: New Leaf
While it's not been massively improved, this is easily the best game in the series to date. I can't stop playing it.



STUART
Fez
So glad I finally caught up with *Fez* this month. It's a cracking puzzle game with clever ideas and stunning presentation.



DAVID
Fez
I missed out on *Fez* when it was released on XBLA, so it's great to see it deserves all its praise.



» [PC] *Fez*'s art style is pure unadulterated retro, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Fez

THE PLATFORMER WITH A TWIST

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £6.99 STEAM ($9.99 GOG.COM)
- » **PUBLISHER:** VARIOUS
- » **DEVELOPER:** POLYTRON CORPORATION
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

» [PC] *Fez*'s big concept is allowing you to twist its flat 3D stages 90 degrees to get around. Sounds confusing, but in practice it works a treat.

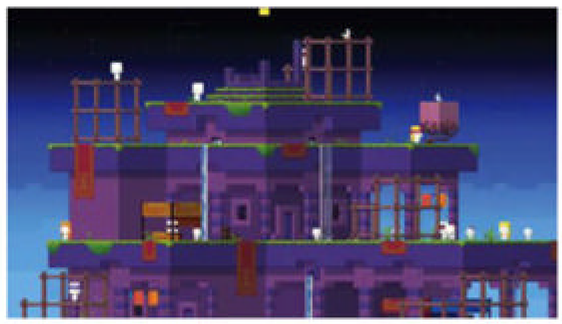


When *Fez* was released digitally last year on Xbox Live, it quickly found itself with legions of fans. Its charming pixel-art visuals and clever level-altering concept – which sees players turning its stages like a Rubik's Cube – were a winning formula, one that saw it become an instant darling of the indie games scene (that whole Xbox 360 patching issue thing aside).

Well, *Fez* finally comes to PC and if you missed out on this enchanting puzzle/platformer first time round, here is a perfect opportunity to remedy that. Deserving of all the acclaim and adulation in our opinion, the brilliance of *Fez* is all in its presentation and design. It's a lovely little treat for the eyes, ears and brain and, as such, falls into that sweet artsy drawer of videogames where you'll find the likes of *Ico* and *Another World*. That being said, the first hour can be a bit overwhelming as it chooses to throw you in at the deep end and let you figure things out for yourself. As such, we weren't too blown away by *Fez* to begin with, struck by a feeling that it was just being too cool and clever for its own good. Navigating between stages seemed a little confusing, and its controls didn't feel as fluid or as responsive as we would have liked either.

Early on, death came often from the stiff-feeling movement of the player-character or ghostly stage decorations like pipes and signage, which looked like solid platforms until we jumped on them and realised they weren't. However, once you get to grips with how *Fez* likes to operate, the way in which its levels are connected and how to use its world map effectively, you soon delight in exploring its stunning three-dimensional 2D world and want to search every flat square inch to find every key, every cube and every artefact that's hidden away.

For those unfamiliar with *Fez*, you assume the role of Gomez, a little ashen creature who resides in a tranquil and colourful 2D village. However, Gomez's world is put into peril when he encounters

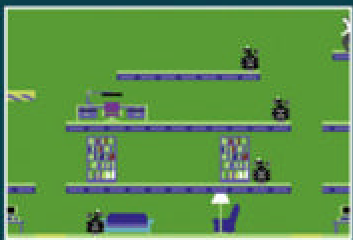


» [PC] The main objective in *Fez* is to locate the gold cube pieces that are scattered its world. This is easier said than done.

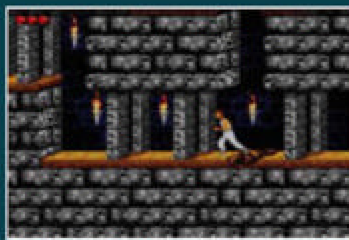




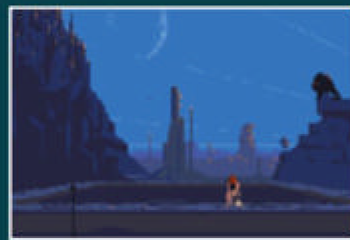
Other puzzle platformers to try



Impossible Mission (1984)
An evil scientist with an amusing name threatens to destroy the world, so Agent 4125 steps in to infiltrate his underground stronghold, gain codes, access computer terminals, avoid robots and save the day.



Prince Of Persia (1988)
Jordan Mechner's Apple II classic was a huge hit that graced countless systems. You have to race against time to prevent a sultan's daughter from getting hitched to the wrong man. One hour, to be precise.



Another World (1991)
Eric Chahi's atmospheric sci-fi classic blended platforming with puzzle and shooting elements. You play a young scientist transported to deadly alien world, and must make your escape with the help of an unlikely ally.



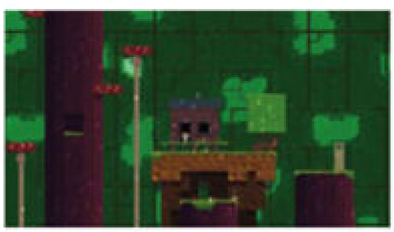
The Lost Vikings (1992)
Developed by Blizzard (then known as Silicon & Synapse), *The Lost Vikings* was a popular side-scrolling platformer. Players have to use the unique traits of three different Viking heroes to progress in the game.

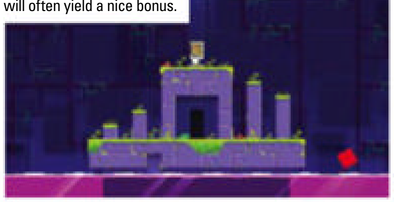
a mysterious hexahedron that gifts him a magical fez hat that enables him to observe his world in a whole new dimension. Problems start occurring when the shape explodes and it causes the world to become unstable. Effectively cleaning up the mess he's unintentionally made, Gomez must retrieve all the pieces of the scattered hexahedron in order to stabilise it. No pressure then.

A thinking man's platformer, *Fez*'s gameplay revolves around finding and reaching the many yellow cube-shaped fragments that are dotted around the world. Some doors leading Gomez to new areas require him to find a certain number of cube pieces before he can enter them, while others simply require keys found hidden inside treasure chests which are also scattered around the world. As you advance, Gomez will come across useful items that prove essential for solving puzzles – and puzzle rooms which, on completion, reward him with special blue anti-cubes. The retrieval of all 32 of these is a secondary goal that gives some longevity to the game once the main adventure has been completed.

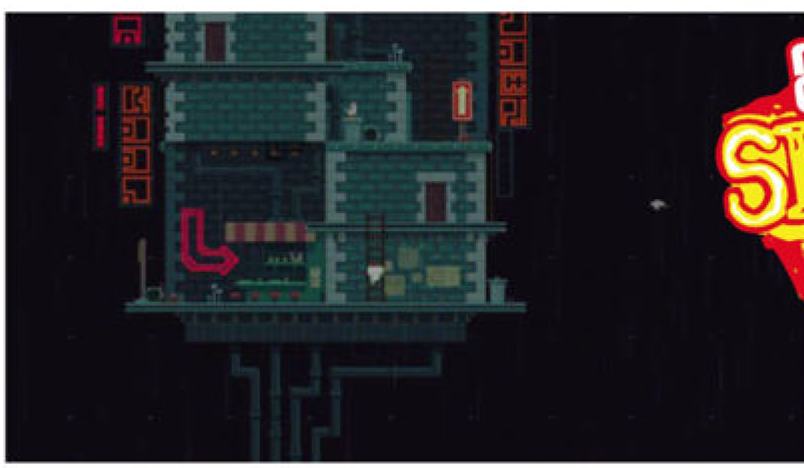
With no enemies to worry about and the added comfort of infinite lives, all challenge comes from progression. The cubes are placed in hard-to-reach areas and to retrieve them requires not only some platforming skills but also clever manipulation of levels. How it works is like this. Levels are always viewed from a flat 2D perspective, but have four sides. Turn a stage 90 or 180 degrees and it could open up a route that previously wasn't there. For instance, by doing this you may make an unreachable platform that was previously sitting at the opposite side of the screen swing around to now be jumping distance from Gomez. Now, if you get Gomez to jump on the platform and swing the stage back to reset it, he will be stood on the platform now back at opposite end of the screen.

While it might sound a recipe for a potential mind melt, in reality it works brilliantly and it's a real testament to *Fez*'s clever level design that rarely do you find yourself getting stuck with no way out. There are a few puzzles in there that had us stumped (there's a particularly tricky one that requires Gomez to pass through a cube of interconnecting doorways, and the only way to the exit is to enter the right doors in the correct order), but when everything about falls into place, *Fez* really is a joy to play. And by exploring and playing around with the game, you soon realise that solutions to puzzles are very often staring you right in the face. Plus, any frustration is cleverly tempered by the game's calming visuals and sublime music, the latter of which is reason alone to buy it.





» [PC] Puzzle rooms like this will often yield a nice bonus.



» [PC] Try to envision a cross between *Manic Miner*, *Ico* and a Rubik's Cube and you've pretty much imagined *Fez*.

BRIEF HISTORY
» *Fez* has had a troubled development. Originally announced in 2007, an early version was shown at the Independent Game Festival in 2008. Attracting media attention, the project was delayed as Polytron lost funding and fell into legal troubles. The game was then demoed at PAX in 2008, and finally saw digital release in 2012.

WHY NOT TRY
▼ SOMETHING OLD
ICO (PLAYSTATION 2)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
SUPER MEAT BOY (XBOX 360)



retro GAMER SIZZLER

In a nutshell
The controls could be tighter, but there's no denying its excellence. Beautiful, clever and charming, hats off to *Fez*. It's one of the most original platformers we've played in a long time.

>> Score **90%**

OPINION


Fez is rife with clever ideas and amazing puzzles that make it a joy to explore. The difficulty does ramp up towards the end, and the controls feel a little woolly at times, but it's a clever and highly entertaining platformer that deserves all the plaudits it has received.

Darran Jones

Gun Commando

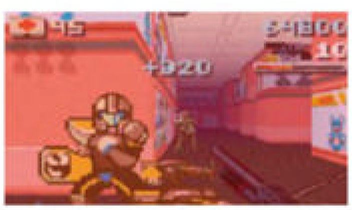
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTING LIKE IT'S 1992

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** ANDROID, PS3 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £0.69 » **PUBLISHER:** RIPSTONE » **DEVELOPER:** GREEN HILL/ABSTRACTION GAMES
» **PLAYERS:** 1



We've been playing iOS first-person shooters for the good part of five years now and we've still not found one with killer controls. Various offerings have come close over the years – including a particularly fine *Wolfenstein 3D* effort from John Carmack himself – but they all falter when it comes down to a lack of buttons.

This new offering from Green Hill and Abstraction Games is the latest victim and while it gets some gunplay aspects very right, it once again stumbles when it comes to the controls. First the good stuff, though. *Gun Commando* is clearly a love letter to the first-person shooters of old. The weapons are varied and satisfying to use, there's a big emphasis on discovering hidden secrets, the maze-like levels are short and easy to navigate, while main character Jack Bennett is a gravel-throated doppelgänger of Duke Nukem, gleefully unleashing hell as he races through the beautiful 8-bit-styled stages. It's certainly looks great if nothing else.



» [iOS] Your gun continually powers up if you keep hitting enemies. A neat mechanic we'd like to see more often.

OPINION



I wasn't really impressed with this if I'm honest. It certainly looks quaint with its retro-themed visuals, but it's a little too simple for its own good. The original *Duke Nukem* was fresh and exciting because there was so much you could interact with. *Gun Commando* misses that.

Stuart Hunt

» [iOS] Some of the bosses require an insane amount of firepower before you can put them down.



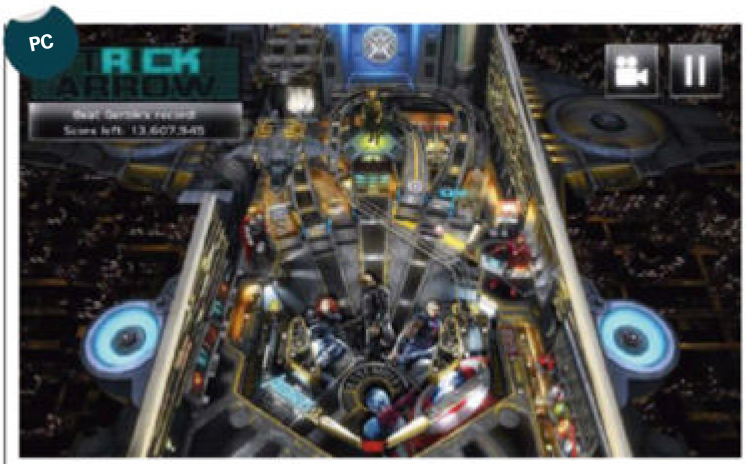
What a shame then that the controls (on mobiles) are a little too fiddly for their own good. Your left thumb takes care of movement, while the right handles your gunsight. Additionally, tapping the left side of the screen sends Jack into a handy slide, while hitting the right lets you fire your many guns. It works fine in practice, but as the levels progress it becomes harder and harder to make the tight movement and aiming that you need, even with adjustments to sensitivity.

There's no denying that *Gun Commando* is a great price and it's a loving tribute to the past, but you'll spend just as much time battling the controls as you do its enemies.

>> Score **65%**



» [iOS] There are plenty of secrets on each stage, so make sure you search every nook and cranny.



» [PC] The Avengers table is very polished, with lots of mini-games to unlock, and different-coloured balls representing each Avenger..

Pinball FX2

TWO STEPS FORWARD AND ONE STEP BACK FOR THE POPULAR PINBALL FRANCHISE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, PS VITA, iOS, XBOX 360
» **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** FREE TO PLAY (£6.99 PER PACK) » **PUBLISHER:** ZEN STUDIOS
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



After a lengthy delay, *Pinball FX2* is finally available on Steam, offering 23 tables based on a variety of popular themes and franchises.

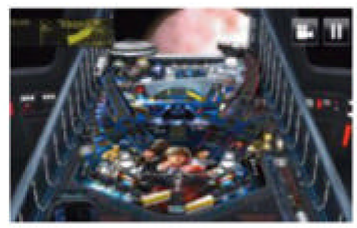
The most interesting aspect of *Pinball FX2* is that the free download gives you access to every single table that can be played for a limited amount of time. You can then buy themed bundles of three to four tables for £6.99. The tables range from standard themes like underwater and racing cars, to popular licences like The Avengers and Star Wars. Frustratingly, none of the excellent videogame pinball tables are accessible, and it's also missing earlier Zen Pinball tables which are available on other services like PSN and Xbox Live Arcade.

Even with the smaller number of tables on offer, *Pinball FX2* still plays an excellent game of pinball, mainly because the design across most of the tables is absolutely top-notch. Some of the playfields are extremely fast, while others are filled with bumpers, flippers, ramps and other elements, allowing you to really savour their intricate design. Zen Studios has also included plenty of excellent online elements, ranging from simple online multiplayer to being constantly reminded of how close you are to beating a friend's score. Add in cool animated elements like iconic Star Wars and Marvel characters that fly around the screen or fire at launched balls, plus the many cool bonus games found on the faux digital displays of each game, and *Pinball FX2* proves to be a solid pinball package. It's just not as strong as previous versions.



» [PC] The range of tables on offer is highly impressive, catering to all sorts of play styles.

» [PC] Sadly, the table based on *The Empire Strikes Back* isn't the original physical one. It's still great to play, though.



>> Score **80%**

OPINION



They may not be based on real pinball tables, but that doesn't matter with Zen Studios at the helm. The range of table designs here is staggering and while I'm not a fan of the way you unlock them, there's no denying that the great tables greatly outweigh the bad ones.

Stuart Hunt

Animal Crossing: New Leaf

NINTENDO'S ANTHROPOMORPHIC VILLAGERS LEARN PLENTY OF NEW TRICKS

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



Since starting life as a niche Japanese exclusive N64 game, Nintendo's *Animal Crossing* has gone on to become one of its most successful franchises. The Wii and DS sequels did very little to build upon the GameCube version (which was itself a port of the N64 game) so it's great to see Nintendo putting lots of effort into this 3DS outing.

While the core components of *New Leaf* remain the same – build relationships with the villagers, collect items, pay off your mortgage and so on – everything has been delivered on a far larger scale, meaning you're never short of anything to do. There are more shops to visit, more things to collect, and much more to buy – in short it's a huge time-waster and we've already lost far too many hours to its addictive qualities.

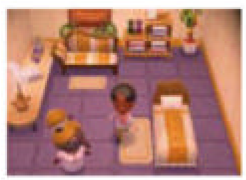
The biggest change is that you're now the town's mayor, granting you the ability to create new facilities and pass laws that range from having a prettier-looking town to allowing shops to open later or earlier to suit your own gaming needs. It offers a far greater degree of customisation over past games and makes you feel even more attached to the charming citizens.

Online integration is very good and Nintendo has also included clever SpotPass features that will ensure you regularly want to interact with other players. There are still numerous little niggles, like occasionally clunky menus and the continual reliance on grinding, but *New Leaf* remains the most impressive *Animal Crossing* so far and a great entry point for newcomers.

>> Score **88%**



» [3DS] Going out at night is always worth it as new creatures can be found.







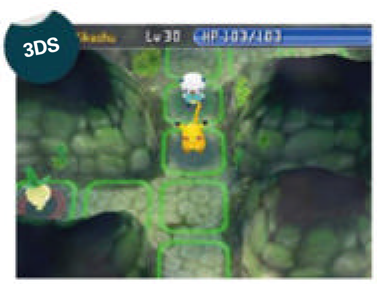


Ninja Strike

» **SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO ON:** N/A
» **PRICE:** £0.69 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> ***Ninja Strike* has** a secret. Hiding beneath its cute, Master System-styled graphics is one of the trickiest games we've played for some time. The idea behind *Ninja Strike* couldn't be simpler. Touch the screen and your ninja strikes in that direction, collecting coins which boost his multiplier, and defeating any enemies in his way. Getting hit ruins your combo, so you're trying to navigate a stage as efficiently as possible. It's a nice idea, ruined by a high difficulty level that wants you to buy high-cost IAP because the in-game products are so expensive.

>> Score **60%**



Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Gate To Infinity

» **SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO ON:** N/A
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> ***Gate To Infinity*** is clearly aimed at kids with its trite storyline and cute visuals, but beneath its cheery exterior is a surprisingly challenging Roguelike affair that'll offer you hours of gameplay if you're prepared to put the time in. The gameplay is certainly basic (you're effectively just travelling and fighting Pokémon), but exploring the huge game world is strangely compelling, while new gameplay mechanics involving augmented reality keep things interesting.

>> Score **62%**

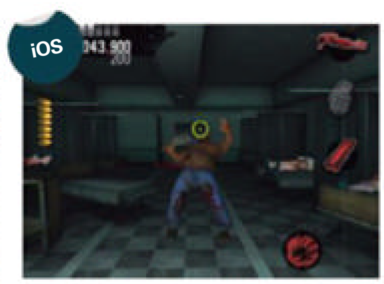


Usagi Yojimbo: Way Of The Ronin

» **SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO ON:** N/A
» **PRICE:** £1.49 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **A new digital** adventure with Stan Sakai's famous Ronin has been a long time coming, but this poor effort really wasn't worth the wait. While the visuals do a fantastic job of capturing the spirit of the original comics, the combat system is terrible. The unlockable combos aren't needed, due to the power of your basic attack, while using a bow is infuriatingly difficult. Add in some inept AI and we found ourselves wishing we were playing the C64 original. Hugely disappointing.

>> Score **44%**



House Of The Dead: Overkill – The Lost Reels

» **SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO ON:** N/A
» **PRICE:** £2.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **Sega's grindhouse homage** to its popular light-gun franchise hits iOS and it's a great port. The biggest issue (the easiness of past light-gun games) has been addressed thanks to a responsive crosshair, while the three stages are surprisingly large and offer plenty of replay value. There are IAPs (a little annoying considering the price of the game), but we never had to resort to using them. A highly addictive blaster.

>> Score **80%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



INFORMATION
» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** Online or retail
» **Score:** 86%

Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D

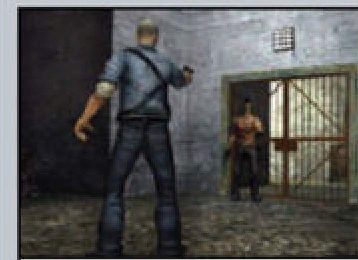
***Donkey Kong Country Returns* was a solid tribute to the original SNES games, so it's pleasing to see it's been re-released for Nintendo's 3DS.**

Realising that a simple 3D port wouldn't be enough to persuade most owners of the original Wii game to double dip, Nintendo has made a number of changes to the game, and they're pretty much all for the better.

The most obvious is that you no longer have to worry about fluffing certain moves, since there's no annoying waggling: the 3DS version uses traditional controls. Nintendo has also tweaked the difficulty slightly and while it's still tough as old boots, you're given a fighting chance with an extra energy heart at the start of the game and whenever you're joined by Diddy Kong. There are also additional items available from the shop, allowing you to stock up on more lives and other goodies. Of course, if you want to be hardcore you can simply play the original version of the game, which has also been included There's a brand new part of Donkey Kong's island to explore as well, with eight new levels which are just as challenging as those in the Wii original.

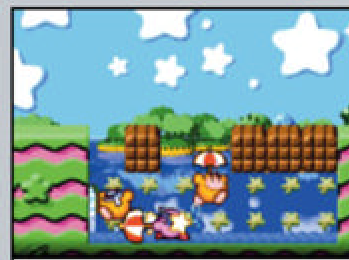
Although *Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D* is a very accomplished port, there are a few niggling problems with it. The 3D, while very impressive in parts (especially whenever anything is attacking you from the background) also has a narrow field of view, making certain jumps very difficult to pull off if the screen goes out of focus. The frame rate is also not as solid as the Wii version, meaning it's not quite as polished. It lacks the gorgeous vibrancy of the Wii offering as well. The graphical downsides, however, are tempered by the fact that the controls themselves are far superior. All in all, this is a really solid port of a highly entertaining platformer.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



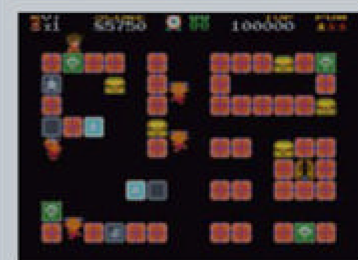
Manhunt

» **System:** PS2
» **Buy it for:** £7.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** 76%
» While we greatly enjoyed the far superior sequel , the original is something of a flawed gem. Yes, the subject matter is rather tasteless, but it features an interesting story, some solid game mechanics (shooting feels far better than in Rockstar's *GTA* games) and plenty of gruesome kills to discover. There's a nice balance between stealth and all-out action, while the visuals have an aptly oppressive style.



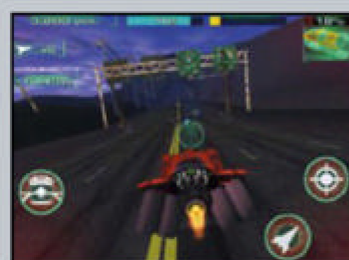
Kirby's Super Star

» **System:** SNES
» **Buy it for:** £5.49
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console (Wii U)
» **Score:** 80%
» Nintendo listens to its fans with yet another Wii U SNES game that runs at 60Hz. *Kirby Super Star* may be a little on the easy side, but it's a great little game that features plenty of fun platforming, as well as Kirby's usual ability to suck up enemies and use their powers against them. It also features a range of great mini-games, from out-eating your opponent to taking down a giant robotic bird. Stupid silly fun.



MajiKazo

» **System:** iOS
» **Buy it for:** £1.49
» **Buy it from:** App Store
» **Score:** 75%
» This delightful offering from Javier Rodriguez Cos reminds us of the classic Taito arcade games of old. The idea behind *MajiKazo* is to simply run around the single-room mazes and find the keys that open the door to the next stage, while avoiding enemies and soaking up power-ups. While it's let down slightly by its fiddly controls, it does feature iCade support, which really transforms it into a must-have download.



Fire & Forget The Final Assault

» **System:** iOS (tested), Android
» **Buy it for:** £1.49 (£1.55 Android)
» **Buy it from:** App Store/Google Play
» **Score:** 51%
» *Fire & Forget The Final Assault* wants to be a fast-paced blaster in the style of *RoadBlasters* or *Spy Hunter.* Sadly, despite pressing all the right buttons, it makes for a rather sterile experience. There are a decent number of levels for the entry fee and it's good fun taking down opponents, but it gets boring far too quickly, with dull bosses and a lack of decent weaponry to experiment with. Highly disappointing.



Karateka Classic

» **System:** iOS (tested), Android » **Buy it for:** £0.69 (£0.65 Android)
» **Buy it from:** App Store/Google Play » **Score:** 86%

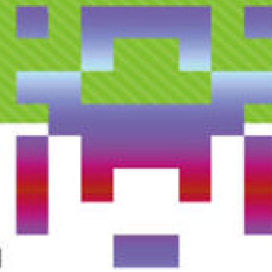
We're amazed it's taken so long to release Jordan Mechnar's first game on iOS, particularly as his *Prince Of Persia* was released so early on the platform. It's here now, though, and has certainly been worth the wait thanks to solid presentation and well-thought-out touch controls that make it a joy to play.

A number of icons are shown on the left side of the screen that allow you to switch between fighting and normal stances, bow or run. Once you enter combat, six more icons appear on the right side of the screen that take care of your punches and kicks. It's a rather elegant system that works extremely well, allowing you to simply focus on the enjoyable combat. Additional touches include the ability to switch the display between colour, amber and green or use a LCD or CRT display, allowing for a truly authentic retro experience.

Karateka remains as solid as ever (though we'd forgotten how difficult it gets), with an interesting range of fighters that put up a stiff challenge. Recommended.

>> The scene's latest news and reviews





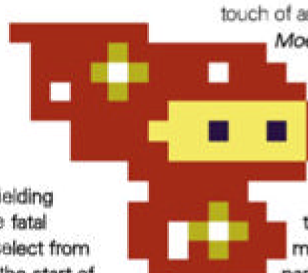
THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF MOEBIUS GOATLIZARD

CONGRATULATIONS MRS GOATLIZARD, IT'S A MOEBIUS!

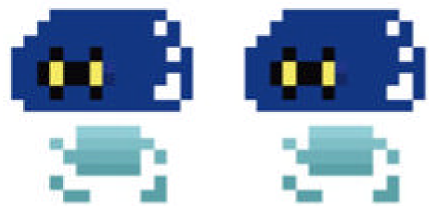
There's a link to the Amiga port of Solomon's Key in What's Brewing on page 105 this issue, but I've just realised that some readers might struggle with the DMS file that its developer has put online. So if you don't know your way around the Device-Masher System software, have a look at bit.ly/171MiSL for an ADF image instead, and that disk's contents can also be dumped onto a hard disk for faster loading.

Our favourite obsessive collector Moebius is back for another OCD-fuelled outing to gather everything in sight, with his quarry this time being randomly generated 8-bit aliens. This means lots of running around platforms and, as in the previous outings, the ends of each platform are linked together, so walking off to the left sees Moebius emerge one level up on the right and exiting stage right moves him down one row and back to stage left.

Dotted around the platforms are teleport pads which allow our oddly shaped hero to move between levels directly and there's also a limited stock of 'hyperspace charges' which, when activated by a stab of the fire button, can be used to zap into the ether in order to escape from a tight spot; the rematerialisation co-ordinates are random and Moebius might end up dumped *perilously* close to an enemy, so the charge leaves him with a little residual shielding to get out of otherwise fatal landings. Players can select from five difficulty levels at the start of play or, if they have a friend handy, can dive into a two-player competitive game where a couple of colour-coded Moebiuses dash around the screen in a bid to collect more aliens than their opponent.

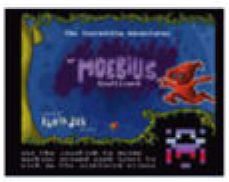


The *Incredible Adventures Of Moebius Goatlizard* was developed by Black Jet, who was behind the last Moebius adventure released on the SAM Coupé – *Lost Disks Of SAM*, which we looked at last year – and it has been based on features from various games in the Moebius canon from the Spectrum. The difficulty curve feels just a little less steep than previous versions, at least for the earlier levels – more experienced players can expect a challenge, especially if they're brave enough to select one of the harder difficulty settings – and, despite some precise collisions and the touch of an enemy being immediately fatal, *Moebius Goatlizard* is just a little easier to get into. As with the previous titles, there's a series of enemies which exhibit a range of behaviours, from simple patrolling of platforms to actively chasing or firing at the player, so understanding the movement patterns of these foes is part of the challenge.

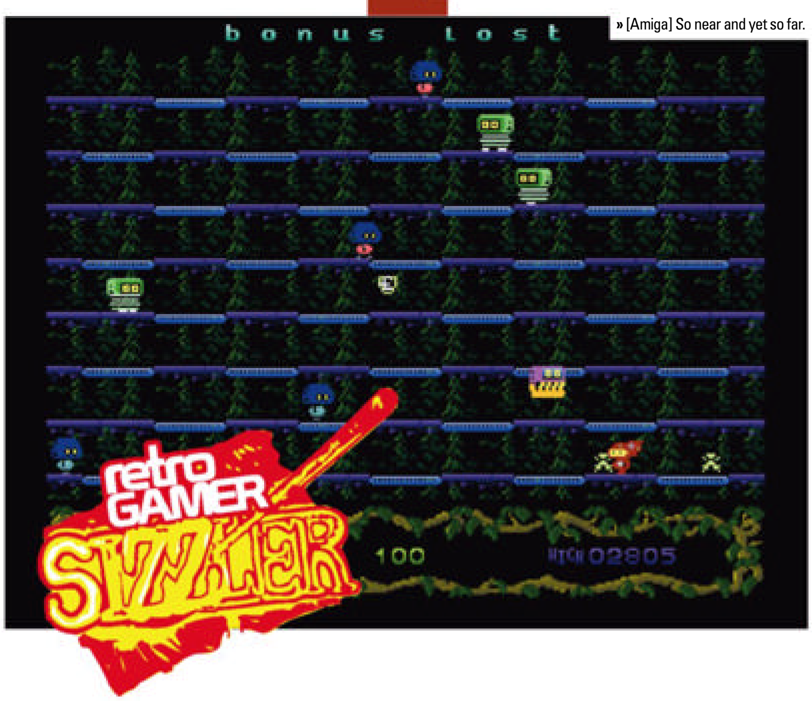


The enhanced graphics put together for the SAM – in turn based on David Hughes' Spectrum originals – have been given another tweak for the Amiga and, along with some solidly defined platforms and creatures, there's now background textures filling the gaps between platforms and some good still pictures which are displayed on the title page and during other events around the game itself. One thing that does niggle in what is an otherwise tidy package is the sound: in-game it's limited to a couple of spot effects and, although the game itself will happily run on a 68000-based Amiga, the title music will be disabled. It isn't a game-killing issue of course, but sound was a selling point for Amiga games back in the day and the option of some in-game music wouldn't have gone amiss.

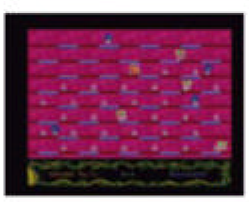
91%



FORMAT: AMIGA
DEVELOPER: BLACK JET
LINK: WWW.KIKSTART.EU/MOEBIUS-AMIGA
RELEASE: 2013
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



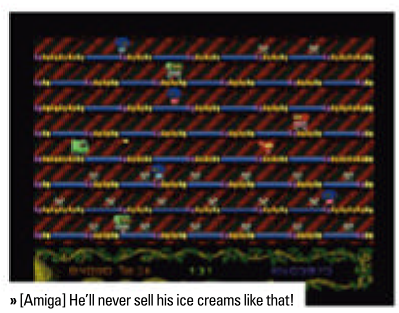
» [Amiga] So near and yet so far.



» [Amiga] These'll be on eBay next week.



» [Amiga] Two Moebiuses battle it out.



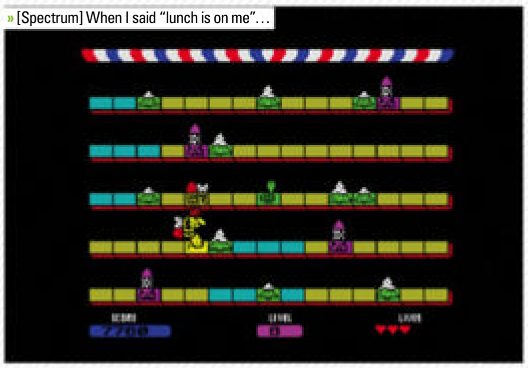
» [Amiga] He'll never sell his ice creams like that!



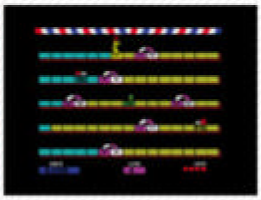
» [Amiga] A quaint little retirement cottage.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



» [Spectrum] When I said "lunch is on me"…





THUNDERTURDS

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** DAVEYSLUDGE
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/THUNDERTURDS-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

Scott Faece has an urge to travel around the play area, leaving a questionable yellow stain everywhere while avoiding the dung beetles, tapeworms, obstructions and, surprisingly, laser beams on the later stages. Items of fruit pop up occasionally, although the question of how a sentient piece of faecal matter can eat a strawberry as big as himself, or indeed why he'd actually want to in the first place, is unfortunately going to be left unanswered.

We don't usually look at games entered into the annual Comp.Sys.Sinclair Crap Games Competition because… well, *they're crap!* But *Thunderturds* takes the competition's theme far more literally than most other entries and, ironically, is actually quite fun to play. We've looked at the original CSSCGC release here, which is a little buggy – dung beetles sometimes get stuck in a way that makes completing the stage impossible – but these problems can be played around and, as long as the scatological theme isn't off-putting, *Thunderturds* is worth some further attention.

78%

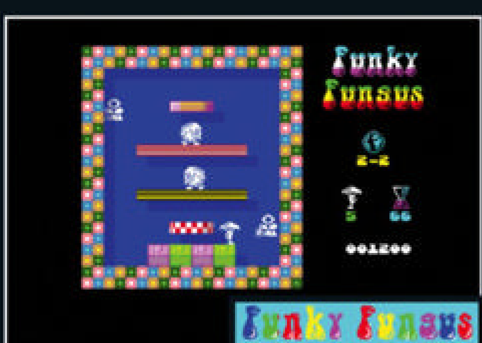
FUNKY FUNGUS

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** ALESSANDRO GRUSSU
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/FUNKY-FUNGUS-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

The village of Fungiland is a happy place populated by mushroom-like beings. Usually they're fun guys to be around, but their territory has been invaded by warriors presumably looking for a fry-up and only Funky Fungus can fight back with the fabled Spinning Star. Each stage sees Funky negotiating his way through invading creatures to the Star, then using its power to dispose of anything moving. Random nasties leave behind grinning skulls, which are fatal to the touch but disappear after a short period, and others drop more useful items including extra lives and time.

Funky Fungus is an extremely tough game. The collision detection is particularly aggressive and on the earlier stages there isn't mushroom… sorry, much room to move. There is a way through each screen within the tight time limit, but most will take a little luck and some frustrating trial and error to actually find.

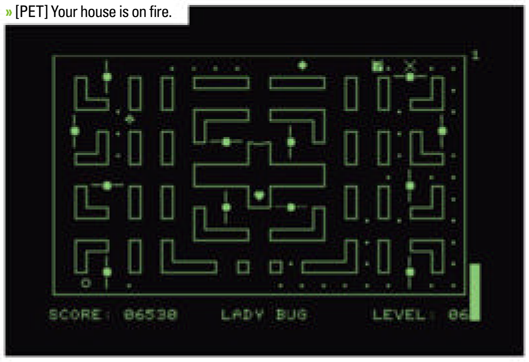
78%



» [Spectrum] Hold still, this might sting a bit.



» [Spectrum] What subtext…?



» [PET] Your house is on fire.

LADYBUG

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE PET » **DEVELOPER:** MIKE JOHNSON
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/LADYBUG-PET » **PRICE:** FREE

The poor Ladybug is desperately hungry and in search of food, but has accidentally wandered into a maze inhabited by creatures who fancy the idea of an insect-flavoured snack. The Ladybug herself appears on screen as a hollow circle, the predators as an assortment of symbols, while food is shown with full stops. Along with the foes and morsels, there are also power-ups around the maze to collect – represented by a question mark – and revolving doors which the Ladybug can push her way through or position to keep her pursuers at bay.

The four enemies are released one at a time by a timer to the right of the play area and each has a different movement pattern, some being brighter than their associates – keeping one eye on the nasties and using the doors as barriers are the keys to success. Overall, *Ladybug* is a solid and playable implementation of the coin-op that makes good use of the PET's limited facilities.

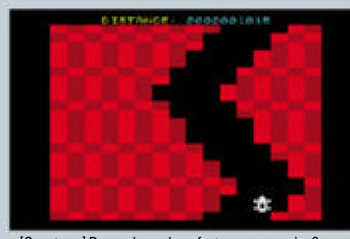
83%



» [PET] Decisions, decisions.

WHAT'S BREWING?

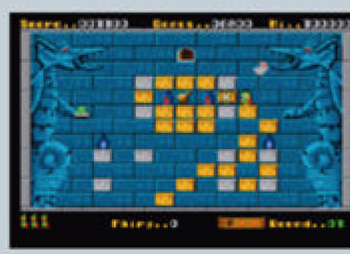
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Spectrum] Do you know how fast you were going?

>> BEEP, BEEP

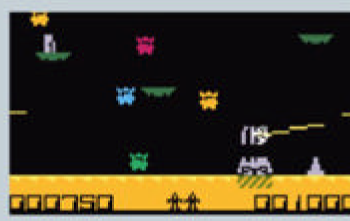
Rally Fever on the Spectrum was inspired by 1984 release *Rally Driver* and, as with the original, the player controls a fast-moving car which must be kept away from the sides of the road. It's currently being described as a demo and we found it pretty difficult to play, but it's still good, simple fun. The download is in the first post of the World Of Spectrum forum thread behind **http://kikstart.eu/rally-fever-spec**



» [Amiga] An excuse to quote Urban Cookie Collective.

>> THE KEY, THE SECRET

After the news about *International Karate* last issue, the list of Atari ST games that didn't see a release on the Amiga has been reduced again; this time it's Probe and US Gold's conversion of *Solomon's Key* which has been 'persuaded' to run by Wanted Team. Amiga-owning fans of platform puzzling should give it a try, although they'll need 1MB of chip RAM for the full in-game experience.
http://kikstart.eu/solomon-amiga



» [Intellivison] We have situation gold.

>> IT'S LONELY OUT IN SPACE

Mark 'Groovybee' Ball has been taking a break from developing software for Atari machines to write something for the Intellivision. *Rocketeer* appears to be a single-screen blasting game which fans of Ultimate's classic *Jetpac* might find excitingly familiar. **http://kikstart.eu/rocketeer-preview-intv** links to the thread at Atari Age which has a 'teaser' ROM to download.

HOMEBREW

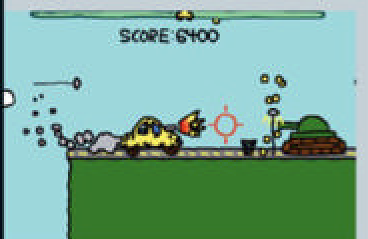
>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> HERE'S SOME THEY MADE EARLIER

Over at free indie website Gamejolt, there's been a competition with the overall theme of chaos; the result was lots of online collaboration and a staggering 90 games released in a variety of genres, ranging from serious shoot-'em-up action like *Chaos Theory* – reviewed on this page – to the crude-looking but entertaining *Shevrolet Shotgun*, which involves launching a car into the air by firing at the ground! **http://kikstart.eu/chaos-contest-pc** goes to the results page, which carries screenshots and page links to all the entries.



>> I THINK WE CAN MAKE IT

Heart Breaker is set in a world where love is taken for granted. One Cupid decides that enough is enough and sets out to destroy a few relationships, his aim to make love scarcer and therefore more precious. Daft storyline aside, this is a horizontal scrolling shoot-'em-up with twin-stick directional firing and some cute in-game graphics. **http://kikstart.eu/heart-breaker-xblig**



FLASH BOREDOM

Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer's** Flash game of the month. This time it's Quantum Corps.

SMASH INTO ILLEGAL SUBSTANCE FACTORIES AND STORM THROUGH THE BUILDING, SHOOTING GANG MEMBERS AND FACILITIES WHILE AVOIDING MINES. THE QUANTUM CORPS SOLDIER CAN'T BE FULLY CONTROLLED AND DOESN'T STOP RUNNING, BUT CAN BE ORDERED TO SLOW DOWN, FIRE OR REVERSE GRAVITY SO HE CAN RUN ACROSS THE CEILING. HTTP://KIKSTART.EU/QUANTUM-CORPS-FLASH

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



ZOMBIE COMPOUND

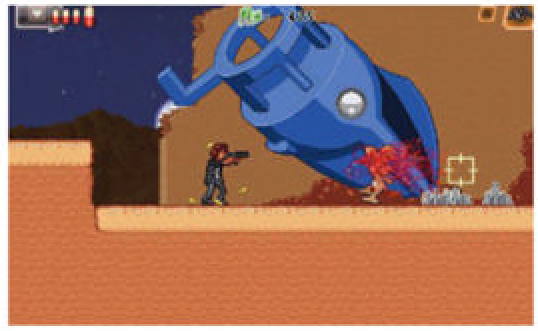
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/ZOMBIE-COMPOUND-XBLIG

Yes, okay, it's *yet another* zombie-blasting twin-stick game on Xbox Live Indie, but *Zombie Compound* does at least have something of an 8-bit vibe and offers local co-op play for up to four survivors of the apocalypse.

The zombies themselves are a hardy strain and take quite a few hits before they finally go down, so defending the compound from them isn't a walk in the park. But weapons can be upgraded and items are sometimes found that activate toys like automated guns, which fire until out of ammo.

And with some expert timing or sheer luck it's sometimes possible to land a hand grenade dead centre of a large shambling crowd of the undead – the results can be worryingly satisfying.





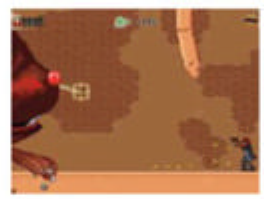
MAYHEM TRIPLE

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/MAYHEM-TRIPLE-PC

There's only one man who can save the world when alien bunnies invade… but he gets hit by a truck right at the start of the very cinematic *Mayhem Triple*, so instead the job is handed over to Miguel 'Mig' Carter, a man of 'few means but great skill'.

Along with his trusty handguns, there are several pieces of ordnance for Mig to pick up – including a few that are hidden away – or purchase from the local arms dealer. The controls use a combination of keyboard input to move Mig and the mouse to aim whatever weapon he's currently wielding, all of which can be configured to the player's liking.





CHAOS THEORY

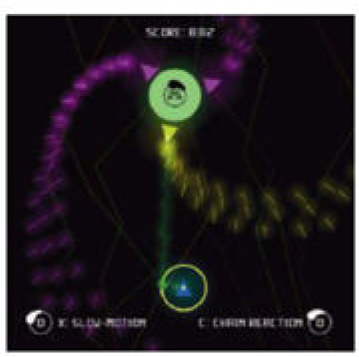
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/CHAOS-THEORY-PC

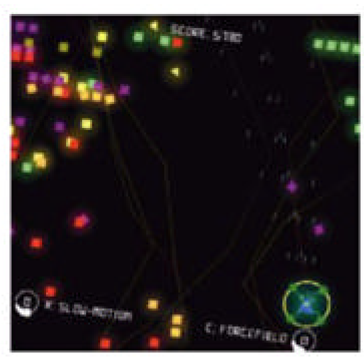
Developed for Gamejolt's recent chaos-themed competition, *Chaos Theory* is an abstract shoot-'em-up with a simple objective: kill or be killed.

The primary weapon is maxed out almost immediately just by blowing away nasties and the game defaults to taking care of firing – either the regular guns during the stage itself or a boss-damaging lightning weapon where appropriate, both of which are switched in automatically. So the player is left to move around, avoid incoming enemies and, when they're charged and ready, trigger the esoterically named secondary weapons which do things like release bullet-spewing butterflies or drag the enemies to a spot conveniently placed in front of the guns.

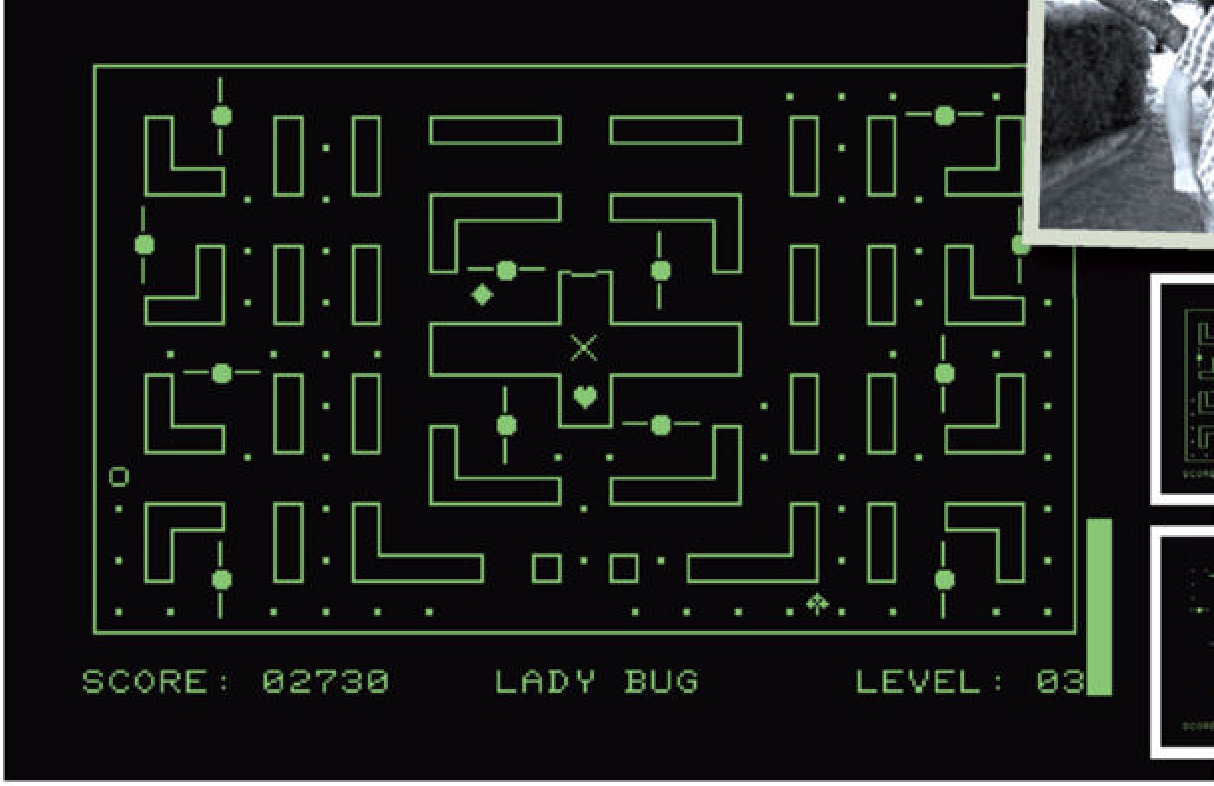
As the player moves left and right, the entire play area and info tilts accordingly; this will probably prove off-putting initially for most players, but it really doesn't take long to acclimatise to. Although the entire thing is somewhat sparse visually, the soundtrack offers a small selection of good up-tempo tunes which all suit the manic action of the game well – this set includes what appears to be a solid remix of the excellent XM module *Unreeeal Superhero 3*, another cover of which appears in the game *Redrunner* on the C64.



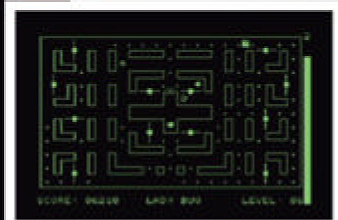




» [PET] Release the cross!







» [PET] You cant get me, ppphhhpppt!



» [PET] The invisible maze.

HOMEBREW HEROES

MIKE JOHNSON LIKES THE COMMODORE PET AND CLASSIC ARCADE GAMES. WE THEREFORE LIKE MIKE AND ASKED FOR A COUPLE OF WORDS ABOUT HIS LATEST PET PROJECT, LADYBUG

Q&A

First of all, what did you find to be enticing about *Ladybug* as a game?
I've always been a retro game fan and since discovering MAME last year I've been able to relive my childhood minus the hundreds of dollars spent on coin-op games. I'd intended to do a version of *Defender* but discovered only this year one was written during the 1980s. *Ladybug* seemed like a good choice for a game.

What in particular drew you towards the Commodore PET as a platform?
I felt that the PET would be a great choice, as I understand there is still a loyal following. I was able to create it in 6502 assembly having learned back in my high-school years.

How long did *Ladybug* actually take you to program?
I began working on the game in January of 2013 and completed it in mid April. It was something I looked forward to, on my time off. I'd pick up a bottle of pop, some junk food, and spend a few hours programming. It was like high school all over again except that I had a family to remind me of my other commitments. Overall I'd say it took me approximately 40 hours including debugging.

Were there any stand out moments during its development?
I used VICE to program the game and Brad Templeton's PAL assembler, which I believe is the only assembler available for the PET. The maze was the first step and from there I'd insert line numbers in front of the graphics to turn them into lines of code. The next step was to code the player and give it some keyboard controls. From there I worked on the doors, which posed some problems.

The biggest challenge was the enemy logic. I'm fascinated with *Super Glooper* on the PET because the [ghosts] actually followed you as they do in the real arcade game (and run away from you when need be). If I could get *Ladybug* to do the same, it would be a challenge to play. Unfortunately I couldn't create the logic to have the enemies go after you.

Toward the last few weeks of production, my motivation dropped and production stalled. I recognised that if I didn't complete it quickly, it might never see the light of day.

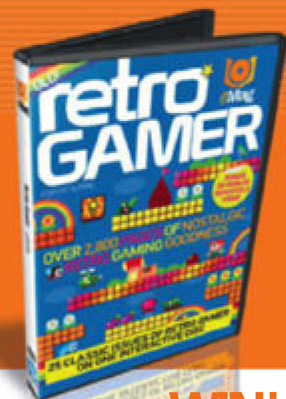
How difficult are action games to write for a machine with limited resources?
There are certain technical issues. Each PET has different ways to read the keyboard, IRQ vectors and memory limits. As the size of the code increased I had to keep moving the machine code higher so as not to be overwritten. During the last week of production I literally had to compile the source code in one VICE window and test-play in another – there wasn't enough room for both.

And finally, can you tell us about what are you're working on next?
My first game was *Oil's Well*, the second was *Ladybug*. I'd really like to work on a third one but I've been monitoring the number of downloads as well as user comments. Given that no more than a dozen people downloaded the first game, I decided that this would be my last game for the PET and included the source code for people wanting to modify it.

Who knows, perhaps in a few years some teenager will blow the dust off a 6502 book and decide to pick up where the PET left off. If only I could travel back in time with my two games, I'd be the most popular kid in grade eight.

MAILBAG

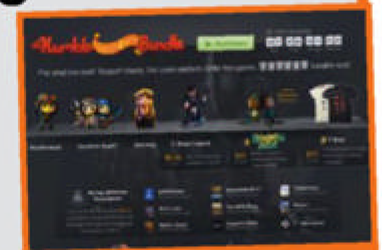
HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



STAR LETTER

"MAKE IT SO"

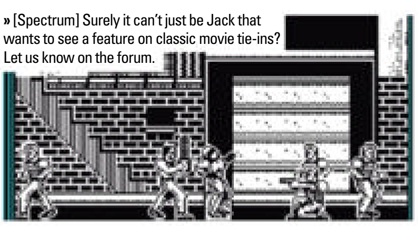
Dear Retro Gamer,
What's happened to the classic videogame compilation? Back in the Eighties and Nineties they were everywhere, but now you hardly ever see them. I'll never forget buying *We Are The Champions* and *The Magnificent Seven* back in the day, and being amazed at how much fantastic value they offered, but now you just don't see it happening. Are publishers too greedy nowadays, or are they concerned that consumers won't buy new games if they know they'll be available in a bundle later on in the year? I don't know personally, but I do know that as game prices continue to climb I'm greatly missing an important part of my youth that ensured my pocket money always stretched as far as possible.
I'd love to see an in-depth article that delved more into this side of gaming and I'd love to know if it was as popular overseas as it was in the United Kingdom. If you could do your best Captain Picard impression and "Make it so", I'll read your mag forever (who am I kidding? I'll never stop reading it).
James Kidd


» Digital packs like The Humble Bundle are the closest we currently get to the compilations of old.

Sadly James, compilations just don't exist like they did back in the day. You'll occasionally see the odd charity pack, or a company throwing two games together in your local supermarket, but that's as far as it seems to go. We think compilations have been replaced nowadays by things like the Humble Bundle; digital downloads that offer a selection of great games for pennies. As for the feature idea, it's a good one, so watch this space.

"YOUR MOVE, CREEP!"

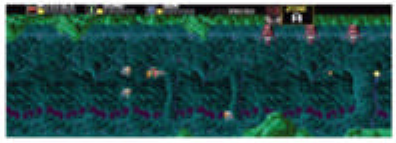
Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I'd really appreciate it if you could run a feature on the best videogame adaptations of classic movies. Growing up in the Eighties, I played all sorts, from *RoboCop* to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and even *Masters Of The Universe*… It would be great if you could delve into this side of the games industry in a little more depth, or even run one of your lists looking at all the best games. Just make sure you include *Alien III* on the Mega Drive or I'll be really upset with you.
Jack Turner


» [Spectrum] Surely it can't just be Jack that wants to see a feature on classic movie tie-ins? Let us know on the forum.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Stuart's leaving

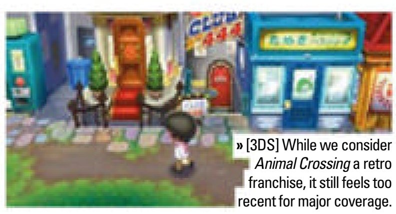
After six long years the party finally ends. Stuart has decided to leave the awesomeness of writing about retro games, for a job in marketing, allowing him to spend more time with his family in Portsmouth. We're going to miss him massively, but it does mean that he might actually finish the Alex Kidd article he's been promising to submit for the past six years.


» [Arcade] Darran remembers seeing a triple-screen *Darius* at the Mega Bowl in Tower Park.

WHERE'S DARIUS?

Hi **Retro Gamer** ,
I was really hoping to see my favourite shooter mentioned on your greatest shooters list. *Darius* may not have been the number one shooter franchise of all time, but when I was a kid in the Eighties and I walked into the arcade and saw a shooter that used THREE monitors, my mind was blown. I loved the game, with its beautiful, colourful graphics, challenging levels, incredible backgrounds and crazy sea-themed aliens. And although my home console experiences never lived up to the arcade (only one sad screen), I still loved playing the different iterations throughout the years. Maybe you left it out so you can do a feature in the future. Wink, wink.
Love the magazine and keep up the good work.
Sterling Cole

We are fans of *Darius*, Sterling, and did come close to putting it in, but something stopped us at the last minute. It's certainly a great franchise with an interesting history, though, so we'll contact Square Enix and see if we can round up any developers for an article in a future issue.


» [3DS] While we consider *Animal Crossing* a retro franchise, it still feels too recent for major coverage.

ANIMAL HOPING

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
Will you be running an article on *Animal Crossing* to celebrate the release of *Animal Crossing: New Leaf* on 3DS? It's a fantastic franchise and has been knocking around since the N64, so I'd say it's more than suitable for coverage in your excellent magazine. You've tended to be a little light on Nintendo coverage recently, so I'm really hoping a feature dedicated to one of my favourite franchises will address the balance somewhat.
Kapp'n

WIN!
Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

Thanks for contacting us, Kapp'n. Unfortunately, we don't have any plans for a dedicated *Animal Crossing* feature any time soon. We have however reviewed *New Leaf*, which can be found on page 101.

TATTOO THIS

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
Just thought you would like a butcher's at my new tattoo. Great magazine by the way, I have been a subscriber since issue 1.
Tony Steeden

PS: Maybe you could do a bit about classic gaming tattoos (for a laugh).

That's a very nice tattoo, Tony. You couldn't go wrong with a classic piece of 8-bit art, so we thing you've made the right choice. Darran always wanted a *Strider* tattoo, but his wife said she'd divorce him if he went through with it. Needless so say, he's rather envious about yours.


» Tony's new tattoo. If anyone could do a decent *Strider* one, Darran would like to hear from you.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag



CONTACT US

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Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

DRAGON SLAYER

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

What on earth possessed you to run with a *Dragon's Lair* cover? Everyone knows it's one of the worst videogames of all time and isn't really a game at all, but a boring memory test that's almost as exciting as playing on an Amstrad CPC 464 (with green screen monitor)…

Matthew Lightbourne

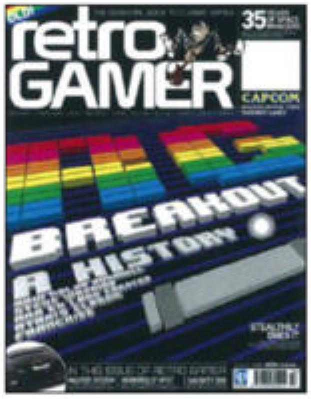
Sorry you're not a fan, but *Dragon's Lair* was a huge deal back in the day and its influence can still be felt today in the likes of *Heavy Rain* and anything using QTEs. With a legacy like that, it's little wonder we wanted to celebrate it.

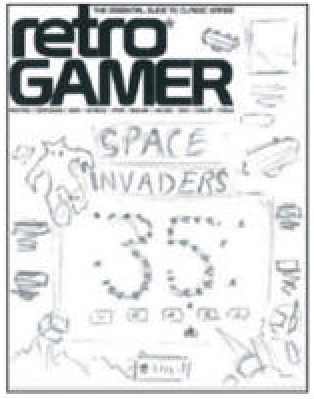


» [Arcade] How Matthew Lightbourne felt after seeing our *Dragon's Lair* article.

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

This issue's covers that nearly happened







DARRAN

We've never done a *Breakout* cover before, so we wanted to try something a little clever to celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Super Breakout*, Ed Logg's impressive sequel. Eagle-eyed readers will realise that this is a take on some box art for *Super Breakout*, but the RG logo felt far too intrusive.



STUART

Some covers never get past the sketch phase and *Space Invaders* was one such example. There was the idea of using an old-school bezel along with the Space Invaders formation spelling out 35, but as we've already done an amazing *Space Invaders* cover we decided to go with something different.

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's the best Master System game?

markopoloman
Alex Kidd In Miracle World. I didn't like the Master System and sold it fairly soon after buying it – BUT *Alex Kidd* was a nice little game and one that I emulate now.

The Laird
Hard one this, but I am going to go with *Choplifter*. It was a great game to start with but the Master System version, with its improved graphics and extra features, is the best of the lot.

RuySan
Phantasy Star. It looked better than many Mega Drive games and it was truly epic. I bought it for my long forgotten Master System after my Amiga broke and before I bought my first PC. It was around '94 and even then it impressed me a lot.

Hitman_HalStep
I have to go for *Ultima IV*, the first RPG I ever played and it completely drew me in and kept me coming back day after day for weeks. I would also have to mention *Enduro Racer*, *Paperboy*, *Double Dragon* and *Dynamite Duke* as other games I put a lot of time into and got a lot of enjoyment out of.

K1NGARTH3R
Golden Axe – my favourite game in the arcade and I played it to death on the SMS when I bought it new.

deadpan666
I can't decide between two! I played platformer *Psychic World* loads on my mate's Master System in the early Nineties, but discovered the lovely *Castlevania*-esque wonder that is *Master Of Darkness* last year! I'll have both, please!

RetroBob
So many great ones! I will go with *Castle Of Illusion*, or *Sonic 1*, or *Shinobi*, or *Alex Kid*…

NES Max
My favourite SMS games are *Rastan*, *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* and *Wonder Boy III*. If pressed to choose, I'd probably pick *Monster Land*, partly for nostalgia reasons.

kiwimike
Loved my SMS. Was blown away with it when I got it, and spent ages playing the *TransBot* card, *Choplifter* cart and even the built-in *Maze* game. But the game I really got into was the (IMO) underrated *Kenseiden*. It's not often mentioned in lists and I thought it was amazing at the time. Been years since I played it, so am a bit worried I have rose-tinted glasses for it!

Rygarman
Wow, Master System… Totally underrated machine that I had loads of fun with and stupidly sold for £15 back in the day – including about 20 games; one of which was *Phantasy Star* that's now worth loads! My favourite game is a hard call… It's probably a fight between *Wonder Boy*, *Bubble Bobble*, *Gauntlet*, *Rastan*, *Dragon Crystal* and *Master Of Darkness*… and since the latter is really dark and moody (I was a right goth at the time), we'll go with that.

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FLASH BACK

Paul Cuisset on the creation of Conrad Hart, the difficult move to 3D and resurrecting his classic hero for a new generation of gamers

Also inside...



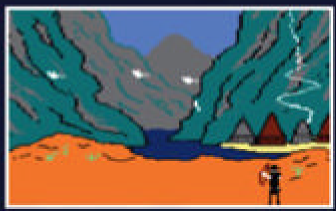
30 years of NES

■ As Nintendo's Famicom turns 30, we look at its impact on the games industry and its legacy



Light-gun games

■ Discover how the genre has evolved, from the early Magnavox days to current popular coin-op guzzlers



Mastertronic

■ As Mastertronic hits 30, we look back at how it redefined gaming on a budget for the 8-bit generation



Mega Drive classics

■ With Sega's machine nearing its 25th anniversary, we asked readers to vote for their favourite games






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ENDGAME



TIGER ROAD

» Tiger Road was a fun scrolling fighter from Capcom that starred a likeable little Shaolin monk on a mission to rescue a group of kidnapped children from an evil king. So, does he succeed in his rescue mission? Are dictionaries full of words? Let's find out as we play through the TurboGrafx-16 version of the game, and grab a dictionary…



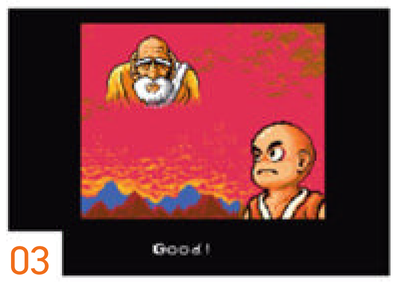
01

» After battling through all of King Ken Ho's dastardly minions, Lee reaches the big man himself. All that stands between him and the kidnapped kids' freedom is one final battle. Better use some tiger power, man!



02

» With the king now defeated, the kids huddle around their hero Lee to sing his praises. We know you're happy but it's probably best to put the axe away now, eh? – we wouldn't want you to accidently nick a head or two, now would we?



03

» Lee sits back and contemplates the battle. Looking up at the sky, he addresses the spirit of his master. With his mission over, Lee can now go home, put his feet up and do whatever monks do to relax. Um, anyone?



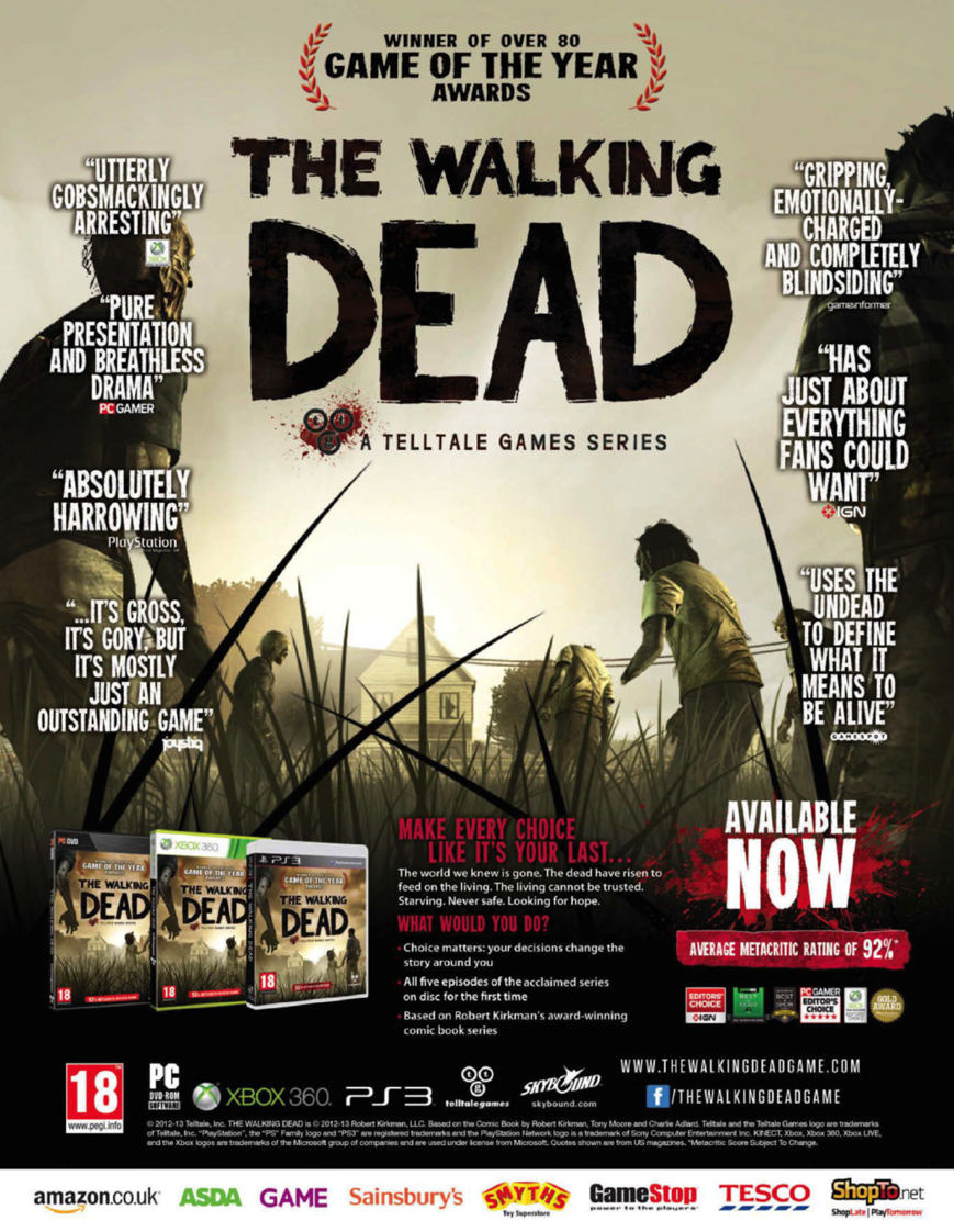
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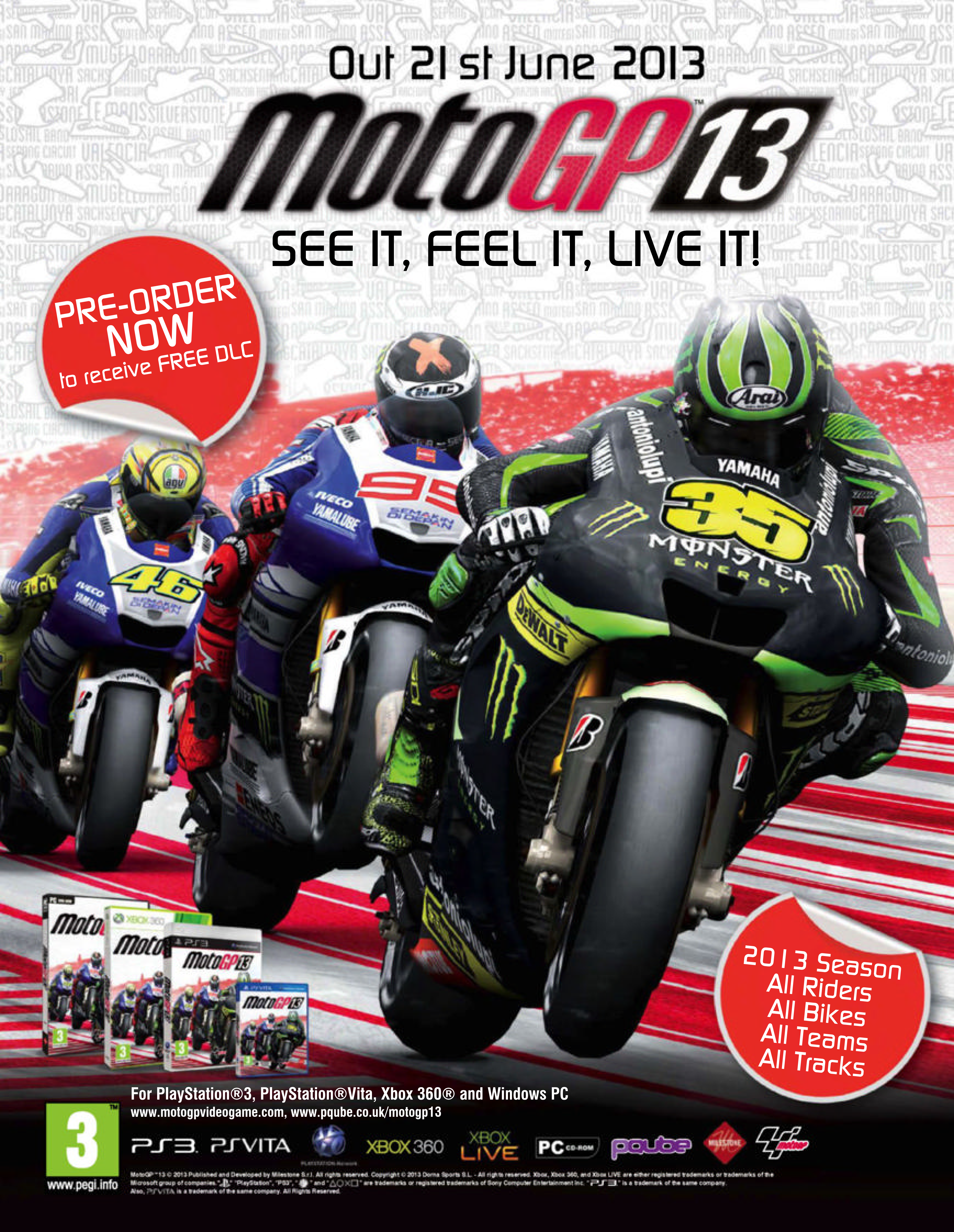
» Lee and the children (well, four of them anyway) leave the palace and skip home. What happened to the others, though? Well, they all decide to stay behind at the palace and loot it of the king's valuables.



05

» As the day ends, Lee decides he's had enough of being a monk and wants to set up his own business. Several years pass and he opens up a day care centre/martial arts school. He dies happy and rich.


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